United Nations A/68/PV.86

General Assembly
Sixty-eighth session

Official Records

86th plenary meeting
Monday, 19 May 2014, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ashe ..... (Antigua and Barbuda)

In the absence of the President, Mrs. Miculescu (Romania), Vice-President, too the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 126

Interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union

Report of the Secretary-General (A/68/827)

Draft resolution (A/68/L.44)

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Morocco to introduce draft resolution A/66/L.44.

Mr. Laassel (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): Under agenda item 126, entitled "Interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union", I should like to introduce draft resolution A/68/L.44. The General Assembly has adopted a resolution under the same name biennially, most recently as resolution 66/261, which was adopted by consensus on 29 May 2012, at its sixty-sixth session.

The delegation of Morocco, as represented by the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Mr. Abdelwahad Radi, who is present with us here today, has the honour of introducing draft resolution A/68/L.44 on behalf of 48 State sponsors. The list of sponsors will remain open with the Secretariat in this Hall to any Member seeking to join. Morocco hopes that the draft resolution will be adopted by consensus.

The delegation of Morocco, together with the IPU delegation, has conducted extensive discussions on the draft resolution, in which all the necessary information was provided on all amendments. The draft resolution is based primarily on previous General Assembly resolutions, with amendments based on the report of the Secretary-General contained in A/68/827. The amendments are aimed at enhancing cooperation between the United Nations, national parliaments and the IPU, especially with respect to drawing up a new agreement among the parties to strengthen institutional relations; contributing to parliamentary work within the framework of the post-2015 development agenda; supporting the presence of legislators and allowing them to participate in the major United Nations meetings and bodies; strengthening the links between the parliamentary hearing process and the main United Nations processes; and encouraging the United Nations bodies and agencies to take advantage of the IPU's experience in strengthening democracy and the participation of the parliamentary institutions.

Ms. Lee (United States of America): I am honoured to be addressing the Assembly on behalf of the United States delegation as a United States congressional representative to the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly. My colleagues and I recognize the close ties that are shared between the United Nations, national parliaments, and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

Let me thank the representative of Morocco for introducing draft resolution A/68/L.44, entitled "Interaction between the United Nations, national

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parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union", and the draft resolution's sponsors.

The United States Congress was a founding member of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and played an active and prominent role for many decades. That is why I am especially honoured and pleased that the United States supports and joins consensus on today's adoption of the draft resolution. The draft resolution builds on previously adopted resolutions and has the important aim of promoting a stronger role for parliaments in the debates and activities held at the United Nations and in the implementation of international commitments at the national level.

The core mission of the Inter-Parliamentary Union is the promotion of parliamentary democracy, the elaboration of standards and criteria for democratic parliamentary practice, the protection of human rights, the political empowerment of women and greater transparency and accountability at the global level, which are in line with United States interests and priorities.

As a Member of Congress myself — I come from California, where I represent the thirteenth congressional district — I have participated in several delegations and meetings of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Most recently, I had the pleasure of hosting a meeting of parliamentarians at the United States Congress during the International AIDS Conference in July 2012. Working with the Inter-Parliamentary Union over my congressional career, I have witnessed first-hand its important work in mobilizing parliamentary action towards universal access to HIV care and treatment.

I want to note the important work of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in working towards meeting the 2015 Millennium Development Goals and its contributions towards the post-2015 development agenda. Governance is a key goal for the next generation of development goals, and the United States welcomes the presence of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in our shared quest to have strong governance goals.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union also helps to strengthen parliaments and increase parliamentary capacity around the world to ensure effective, accountable Governments, and the United States welcomes the work of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in that regard. The United States also welcomes the initiative of the Inter-Parliamentary Union to convene the fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament at the United Nations in 2015 as a contribution to the post-2015 process.

Finally, as the global community is ever so challenged contending with several complex challenges simultaneously, it is more important than ever for the Inter-Parliamentary Union and national parliaments at large to be involved in the work of the United Nations to promote peace and diplomacy, uphold international law, protect the human rights of all, support the empowerment of women and turn the tide of global climate change. My colleagues and I look forward to supporting and enhancing IPU's activities at the United Nations.

Ms. Egoli (Italy): Italy has always had a close association with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) — a bond strengthened through the presidency of Mr. Pier Casini during his term as Speaker of the Italian Chamber of Deputies from 2005 to 2008. We commend in particular the democratic mission that the IPU pursues through the strengthening of parliaments.

As the report of the Secretary-General (A/68/827) makes clear, the IPU operates at every level to achieve that goal, often in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme and other United Nations agencies. One of the points that the draft resolution (A/68/L.44) we are discussing today refers to is the fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament, which will take place in New York shortly before the United Nations summit of Heads of State and Government in September 2015. The Conference will be a unique opportunity not only to lend political momentum to the sustainable development goals, but also to promote a broader reflection on the role of national parliaments in international relations, on the modalities for cooperation between parliaments and national Governments, and on the need to reform politics so that it is better able to meet the needs of citizens. And that is a very timely debate also in my country, if I may add.

Italy greatly appreciates the fact that the gender dimension is present in all the activities conducted by the IPU in the areas of support for democracy, development and peace. The question of women's rights and equal opportunities is one of the pillars of the IPU's action, as demonstrated by the activities carried out by the IPU to initiate reforms of election procedures and of the composition of political parties in order to increase

the presence of women. At least one third of seats must be occupied by women, according to the Beijing Declaration.

Allow me to mention that Italy has made remarkable progress in that area and is now ranked thirty-first in the world classification maintained by the IPU, with approximately 29 per cent of seats in Parliament held by women. The Speaker of the Italian Parliament today, for example, is a women — Ms. Laura Boldrini — who is also a member of the preparatory committee of the Speakers Conference.

Italy, together with its European partners, supports the IPU's call to include a democratic governance goal in the new sustainable development goals. The consultations that the IPU has conducted with parliaments throughout the world have demonstrated the international community's strong support for that goal. The contents and modalities of those consultations are another shining example of the backing that national parliaments can provide to development and, especially, to the realization of the ideas at the focus of United Nations debates. The IPU's activities are all the more important as they contribute to achieving that end.

Ms. Ortíz González (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico acknowledges the significance of this meeting on interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). In an international system based on the principles of the rule of law and democratic governance, we need stronger parliamentary participation on a global scale in order to identify possible solutions to global problems and to work on them. The parliamentary perspective in United Nations consultations and decisions strengthens them whenever it has the support of the representatives of the people of Member States. States' commitments that take parliamentarians' opinions into account are more inclusive and therefore more likely to be observed, in view of the fact that those same actors are responsible for their implementation at the national level.

The work of the Inter-Parliamentary Union has strengthened parliaments' efforts to get involved in global governance and has promoted transparency and accountability in the implementation of international commitments in various areas, such as development, democracy, cooperation, the environment, the strengthening of international law, security, peace and human rights. Mexico therefore firmly believes that this cooperation between parliamentarians, the IPU and the United Nations should be encouraged and strengthened.

The Government of Mexico supports cooperation between the Inter-Parliamentary Union and UN-Women with a view to incorporating gender perspectives at the institutional level and to promoting fairness, pluralism and the participation and representation of women in parliamentary politics. We have shown our commitment to this initiative through the recent enactment by our Congress of an amendment to the Constitution of the United Mexcian States, introducing a requirement obliging the parties to ensure gender parity in candidacies for the federal and local legislatures.

We also recognize the IPU's efforts to increase parliamentarians' familiarity with the principal United Nations instruments in the areas of disarmament and non-proliferation. In that regard, we would like to highlight the IPU's participation in the second International Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, held in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, in February. Also worthy of note was the IPU's role in the parliamentary forum held within the framework of the first High-level Meeting of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation in Mexico in April, which emphasized the importance of parliaments to the international agenda on development and cooperation.

Another highlight is the Inter-Parliamentary Union's involvement in the process of forming the post-2015 development agenda, which is a fundamental issue. To that end, parliaments and their members have assumed greater responsibilities in the international arena and are playing a more active role at the national, regional and global levels in three areas of sustainable development — economic, social and environmental. Mexico's lawmakers are supporting efforts aimed at achieving an agenda for universal and transformative development that is inclusive and whose fundamental goal is dealing effectively with reducing poverty and inequality.

Parliaments are significant players in the work of putting together the international agenda. Their participation in the work of the United Nations broadens the Organization's reach by giving its intergovernmental arena a wider, more pluralist and qualitative vision of cultural and political diversity.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that, in an unprecedented step, the Government and the Congress of Mexico have agreed on a series of transformative reforms aimed at making Mexico a more productive and prosperous country for the benefit of Mexican families. The reforms we have undertaken include

policy efforts in the areas of politics and elections, education, telecommunications, competitiveness, energy, taxation and finance, aimed at creating better conditions for addressing the challenges involved in combating poverty and hunger, and at producing better living conditions for implementing an ambitious development agenda.

I would like to convey the commitment of Mexico's parliamentarians to continuing to actively contribute to advancing the agenda of this Organization in order to enrich it and make its implementation more effective.

Mrs. Jurcan (Romania): I would first like to express our gratitude for the decision to organize this useful debate — a commemorative one this year — on interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). We should recall that on 30 June 1889, the participants in the first Inter-Parliamentary Conference, in Paris, decided to establish it as a permanent institution. That conference's document has been called the founding act of the Inter-Parliamentary Conference and thus, indirectly, of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Conceived at the time as an arbitration forum for resolving differences between States, the IPU of today could hardly be better characterized than by the description of one of its founding fathers, Frédéric Passy, when he said that "The world is made of achieved utopias. Today's utopia of today is tomorrow's reality." It is no wonder that this French statesman and his British counterpart, Sir William Randal Cremer, were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1901 and 1903, respectively.

As a representative of a country that has been a member of the IPU since 1891, almost since its inception, I am proud to note that on its 125th anniversary the Inter-Parliamentary Union enjoys well-deserved recognition for its remarkable contribution to strengthening parliamentary institutions worldwide and promoting democratic governance. It has achieved numerous accomplishments during that journey, which is why I must limit myself to mentioning only two.

Its initial membership of 11 countries has now reached 164 States and 10 associate members. Its initial focus, on the peaceful settlement of disputes, has shifted to cover a wide range of connected topics, such as human rights, the rule of law, the rights of women and children, gender equality and non-proliferation and disarmament. At this critical point in time, it is also focused on speeding up implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and designing the post-2015 development agenda.

I would like to convey Romania's appreciation for the Secretary-General's report (A/68/827), which represents a comprehensive review of the specific actions and political interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the IPU. As the report notes, the IPU

> "is the only parliamentary organization with a global reach. As such, and as a Permanent Observer to the United Nations, it is well positioned to channel the views of parliaments and their members directly into all major United Nations deliberative processes [and] is also a key vehicle for supporting the implementation of global commitments at the country level both by strengthening the capacities of parliaments to carry out their legislative, oversight and representative roles and by providing them with relevant information about United Nations operations and decision-making processes" (*A/68/827, para. 3*)

We note with satisfaction that in section IV, on parliamentary oversight of international commitments, the report contains a reference to the first regional seminar for Central and Eastern Europe, jointly organized by the Parliament of Romania and the IPU in Bucharest in February. The event brought together 70 participants, including 40 members of Parliament from 13 countries in the region. Recognizing the need to intensify efforts to promote human rights and the universal periodic review mechanism of the Human Rights Council, speakers illustrated the difficulties faced, particularly due to the lack of experience, information and resources. In order to overcome those obstacles and to fulfil the mission to protect human rights, it was recommended that such a topic take a central place on parliamentary agendas. The Secretary General of the IPU concluded that

> "the seminar showed that [members of Parliament] are starting to contribute to the work of the Human Rights Council and are keen to be more supportive".

In the same vein, I would like to mention another recent development related to the topic under discussion at our debate today. Under our chairmanship-in-office, the Parliament of Romania hosted, from 9 and 11 May, the inaugural session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the South-East European Cooperation Process. In his opening remarks, the Speaker of the Chamber of

Deputies of Romania declared that what was happening in Bucharest was a historic moment for Romania and for the other countries in the region and that it was well known that that part of the Balkans had always been troubled by tensions and conflicts. He went on to say that for the first time all 12 countries in the region affirmed that they would go along the same path.

The most important message to convey was that only together can we contribute to the progress of the entire region. Only together can we promote the common interest of strengthening stability and security in the Balkans and provide a European and Euro-Atlantic perspective for all countries in South-Eastern Europe. He said that Bucharest was hosting the first Parliament of the Balkans — a Parliamentary Assembly that would have a deeper political commitment and greater responsibility to individual and specific issues in our region. A joint communiqué of the Parliamentary Assembly of the South-East European Cooperation Process was adopted at the end of the meeting.

I cannot conclude my remarks without expressing our appreciation to the Permanent Mission of Morocco for drafting the text and for successfully conducting the negotiations on draft resolution A/68/L.44, which we are discussing here today. Romania is a traditional sponsor of the resolution, and I would like to express my conviction that, this year again, it will be adopted by consensus. The main thrust of the document is that, in order to reach the future we want, all stakeholders — executive and legislative included — should continue to work together and that there are still more measures to be taken in order to achieve greater complementarities and synergies.

Mr. Tommo Monthe (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): We have read with great interest the report submitted by the Secretary-General under item 126 of the agenda of the sixty-eighth session, contained in document A/68/827. The document, including its informative annex, describes the specific activities undertaken in the various areas in the context of cooperation among the United Nations, national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). We thank the Secretary-General for the clear presentation of the report and its seven recommendations. There is no further need to underscore the extremely important role of national parliaments in their triple function of representation, legislation and oversight in such diverse and complex areas as governance, economic development, social progress, understanding and cooperation among peoples and nations. The bicameral Parliament of Cameroon is increasingly strengthening its effectiveness in that approach.

The IPU, an institution that now comprises more than 164 member States, will celebrate its 125th anniversary in June. Throughout the years, it has demonstrated its importance, effectiveness and contribution to the conduct of international affairs and cooperation. We welcome the work of its outgoing Secretary General and congratulate and encourage the new Secretary General, Mr. Martin Chungong, our compatriot, who takes over as the first African to lead the institution in the 125 years of its existence. The IPU has already greatly benefited and contributed to our country. May that cooperation and mutual assistance continue and strengthen.

In Africa, as the report of the Secretary-General clearly shows, the IPU has played and continues to play a very important role in the dialogue at the national and international levels to strengthen peace, social cohesion and development and to promote the rule of law. We call on the new Secretary General to continue that work.

We are at a decisive moment in world development following the important United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, which set out the future we want. As a result, a number of processes are under way to establish guidelines, set goals and mobilize the human, financial and technical resources for their implementation and monitoring. We share the view of the Secretary General that the IPU should make a significant contribution to that activity. It can do so by raising such awareness among its members and by gathering and sharing their opinions about the stakes and challenges and their implications for and true impact on the rule of law, well-being, benefits, disadvantages, commitments and obligations for the various peoples of the world that the IPU is meant to represent.

That is why the seven recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his report, in particular the recommendation contained in paragraph 32 (c) on the role of national parliaments with regard to the sustainable development goals, are very relevant. That is also why Cameroon supports the provisions of draft resolution A/68/L.44, which, as a sponsor, it submits for consideration and adoption by all General Assembly members.

Mr. Le Hoai Trung (Viet Nam): It is an honour to speak in this plenary meeting today under agenda item

126, entitled "Interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union".

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the United Nations share a common vision of peace, security, cooperation and development. The primary purpose of the United Nations, as enshrined in its Charter, is to maintain international peace and security. Similarly, the IPU was first established to promote the concepts of peace and international arbitration. The IPU focuses on fostering dialogue and cooperation, considers issues of international interest and promotes human rights, which are also the main areas of work of the United Nations.

Viet Nam welcomes the support to the United Nations by the IPU and its member parliaments, which has enhanced the United Nations stature and effectiveness, not only in the international arena but also at the national level. In that connection, we applaud the IPU's efforts in promoting the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), especially those on women's empowerment, reducing child mortality and combating HIV/AIDS, as highlighted in the Secretary-General's report (A/68/827). We also commend the IPU's continued commitment to provide the United Nations data on women in politics in order to track progress on MDG 3, on gender equality and the empowerment of women, as well as its engagement in the relevant processes to draft the post-2015 development agenda.

The National Assembly of Viet Nam is the supreme organ of State power and represents the will and aspirations of our citizens. Through its powers in constitution-making, law-making, oversight and deciding important matters of the country, the National Assembly of Viet Nam plays an important leadership role in the country's endeavours for peace, stability and development. The National Assembly has also been instrumental in the implementation of important international commitments, especially in the maintenance of peace and security, sustainable development and the protection and promotion of human rights.

As an active, constructive and responsible member of the IPU for the past 35 years, the National Assembly of Viet Nam has been working closely with the IPU in realizing the Union's aspirations, principles and objectives and has continuously expanded friendly relations with other parliaments and peoples around the world. It is against the backdrop of that commitment that Viet Nam will be proud to host the one hundred and thirty-second IPU Assembly in Hanoi in March 2015, under the theme "Parliament and the implementation of sustainable development goals beyond 2015".

We strongly believe that parliaments have a crucial role to play in the implementation of sustainable development goals and the overall post-2015 development agenda through their powers in legislation-making, budget approval and the monitoring of development commitments. We also believe that the inputs from parliamentarians will be important elements to complement the overall United Nations process.

The complicated situations and tensions in various parts of the world today, including the ongoing tensions on the Eastern Sea in South-East Asia, underline the immense and overriding importance of preserving peace, which is a sine qua non for all peaceful endeavours. That requires the continued and determined promotion of, and constant attention to, the fundamental principles of international law, including those related to respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of States, non-threat or use of force and the peaceful settlement of international disputes in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law, which includes the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Lastly, I take this opportunity to thank the IPU for its hard work and efforts to strengthen the important interactions with the United Nations. I also wish to thank the delegation of Morocco for introducing and facilitating draft resolution A/68/L.44, which we strongly support and are very pleased to co-sponsor.

Mr. Koncke (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Uruguay is a sponsor of draft resolution A/68/L.44 and reiterates its commitment to achieving greater and closer cooperation among national parliaments. We also underscore the work they carry out in supporting and coordinating increasingly relevant efforts with the United Nations.

Much has taken place in the world and in the joint work of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the United Nations on the international agenda. A great deal has been done to strengthen the working methods of the IPU and the interaction between the two organizations since the signing of the agreement establishing their

cooperaton. in 1996, in order to achieve the purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and the fulfilment of its goals in various areas of work.

Uruguay would like in particular to emphasize the role of those joint efforts when it comes to democratizing international relations and in seeking efficiency in addressing the challenges facing a world that continues to experience serious crises and must make use of all possible actors to achieve the efforts required by the Millennium Development Goals and, at present, to successfully draft the post-2015 sustainable development agenda. As part of that work, national parliaments play an undeniable role with the United Nations in the context of national strategies to implement the decisions agreed at the United Nations.

The draft resolution recognizes the work of the IPU in areas such as gender equality, women's empowerment and combating violence against women. It also acknowledges the close cooperation between the IPU and the various United Nations bodies with responsibility in those areas, such as the United Nations Eentity for Gender and Equality and the Empowerment of Women, the Commission on the Status of Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

Uruguay shares the view that the IPU is a focal point with global reach that facilitates diplomacy and dialogue, in which all systems of the world are represented. It therefore provides a unique platform for monitoring trends and political views globally. We also believe that the IPU shares the goals of the United Nations, supports its efforts and works closely with the Organization. In that context, the elements I have outlined, as well as others that are part of day-to-day work of the IPU and the United Nations, justify the call for improving the system of working methods shared by the two organizations, including a regular annual exchange on coordination between the United Nations executive bodies and the members of the IPU's leadership, with a view to conferring greater coherence in the work between the two organizations while maximizing parliamentary support for the Organization and forging a strategic partnership between them.

Similarly, given the ongoing trend in the cooperation between the two organizations, Uruguay believes that it is necessary to sign a new cooperation agreement that reflects the progress and developments in the joint work between the two organizations over the past years and that grants the IPU enhanced institutional status in li. e with the work it carries out, to which I have referred.

Finally, Uruguay supports the decision to include in the provisional agenda of the Assembly's seventieth session an item entitled "Interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union", as well as to request the Secretary- General to submit a report on that item owing to the unique nature of the role of national parliaments and their support for the work of the United Nations.

Mr. Estreme (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina resolutely supports enhancing the interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). We therefore welcome the efforts made by the Inter-Parliamentary Union to achieve greater and sustained political support for the work of the United Nations.

The United Nations and the IPU continue to show their determination to work closely in various areas on issues as diverse as peace and security, socioeconomic development, human rights and the promotion of democracy. We must encourage closer cooperation between the two organizations, in particular to strengthen parliamentary institutions in countries emerging from conflict or transitioning to democracy.

That is why Argentina welcomes the draft resolution before us (A/68/L.44), which we have sponsored. It urges the United Nations system to develop a more structured and integrated way of interacting and to engage in more intensive joint work with the national parliaments through their participation in the work of the General Assembly, in particular with respect to national development strategies.

The path that has led to this text of the draft resolution and the adoption of previous resolutions represents an effort to forge a strategic alliance between the two organizations, which reflects the evolution of their mutual cooperation since the original agreement was signed in 1996. In that respect, I believe we should consider enhancing and probably reformulating that agreement in order to give it greater substance. Likewise, we welcome the fact that the United Nations system is engaging jointly with national parliaments through the IPU in a more systematic manner, taking into account the fact that the national parliaments have assumed a key role in reviewing and implementing the various international commitments that the countries represented at the United Nations have undertaken. In

that respect, the IPU continues to provide space for the members of national parliaments to discuss more in depth the best way of contributing to the main United Nations processes.

Argentina reiterates the importance of national parliaments participating in this Organization and fulfilling the function of representing the interests and desires of their peoples in order to disseminate and further democratize the knowledge of the instruments that are used in United Nations negotiations or that have been negotiated and to contribute to the ratification process for such international instruments and the laws for their implementation. All of that should contribute to strengthening international norms and multilateral agreements so that they are not merely rhetorical and provide the necessary regulation of norms in our countries. Such participation should also prioritize agreements reached within the context of national parliaments when such parliaments exist.

The role of national parliaments is also crucial to achieving sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda, in particular with respect to monitoring and accountability. A debate was held here at the United Nations on that issue a few days ago. The Secretary General of the IPU mentioned in particular the importance of such parliaments in monitoring and accountability in the post-2015 development agenda. My country resolutely supports the role of parliaments in that regard.

Finally, I would like to express my appreciation for the efforts of the Permanent Mission of Morocco to the United Nations in its role as facilitator of the negotiations on the draft resolution before the General Assembly. We hope that the draft resolution will be adopted by consensus, as in previous years.

Mr. Gálvez (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Chile welcomes the convening of this debate and the report of the Secretary-General (A/68/827) on the interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). We also recognize the work of the IPU President, Mr. Abdelwahad Radi, and take this opportunity to also thank its Secretary General, Mr. Anders Johnsson, who will complete his term in a few weeks. We wish every success to his successor, Mr. Martin Chungong.

The joint action required by the current international system to address the many challenges it faces also requires the involvement of a variety of actors in international processes. As a permanent observer to the United Nations, the IPU has a key role to play in representing parliaments and parliamentarians in those international processes. As noted in the report of the Secretary-General, parliaments are the main link between the Governments represented at the United Nations and the citizens they represent. We therefore encourage the United Nations and the IPU to continue to work together on the various challenges — peace and security, economic and social development, climate change, international law, human rights and gender issues, democracy and good governance.

Chile appreciates that draft resolution A/68/L.44 addresses issues that we believe to be important, in particular the need for a greater contribution by parliaments at the national level and the Inter-Parliamentary Union at the global level in the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda and the contribution of the Inter-Parliamentary Union to the work of the Human Rights Council. We also welcome the possibility of holding joint events for the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union in tandem with the main conferences and processes of the United Nations. We also appreciate that the gender perspective continues to be enhanced in the cooperation between both organizations.

Chile's interest in strengthening parliamentary diplomacy has been manifest in its promotion of parliamentarians' participation in national delegations in bilateral official visits and various international processes. Here at Headquarters, that has been evident in recent years in the participation by Chilean parliamentarians in the annual parliamentary hearing at the United Nations, in meetings organized by the IPU and UN-Women in the context of the Commission on the Status Women, and their participation as representatives in relevant negotiations, such as those that led to the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty. In addition, Chilean parliamentarians have participated in meetings of States parties to the bodies created pursuant to human rights treaties and other events in the United Nations system.

I would like to conclude by saying that we are pleased to sponsor the draft resolution before the Assembly today. We hope that it will be adopted by consensus and that it will make a concrete contribution to further strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I welcome draft resolution A/68/L.44, on interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). My country fully supports and will sponsor the draft resolution, and believes that a relatively important step forward has been taken in terms of the cooperation between the United Nations, national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, which began back in 1996. We fully agree with the statements made by the representatives of Argentina and Chile to the effect that the draft resolution outlines a more structured cooperation between the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the United Nations.

In today's world, it is essential that we improve interaction and cooperation between national parliaments, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the United Nations. The challenges are completely global and the responses to them must therefore be global, too. Spain has demonstrated its support for that interaction many times and perhaps most particularly in the statement made by the Spanish delegation at the 130th meeting of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, held in Geneva last year. We also recall the fundamental participation in and commitment of the members of the Inter-Parliamentary Union to multilateralism, support for democracy and the defence of human rights. Proof of that is the eight Nobel Peace Prize recipients who distinguished themselves in this important area, including two of the Inter-Parliamentary Union's founders, Frédéric Passy and William Randal Cremer.

Almost all speakers who preceded me emphasized the importance of achieving greater interaction between national parliaments, the United Nations and the citizenry. The United Nations should have even closer ties to national parliaments, and parliaments to their citizens, so asto ensure that the decisions made at the United Nations, whether in the Security Council, the General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council, end up on the agendas of national parliaments. It is those national parliaments that ultimately have to enact and improve the decisions made here. If we can solidify this interaction between national parliaments and the United Nations, and if parliamentarians are aware beforehand of what is being done in the United Nations and its bodies, we can make multilateralism more effective. I would specifically cite the post-2015 development agenda in that respect. Right now, I believe, the United Nations is establishing the major outlines of the post-2015 development agenda, and it is essential that national parliaments, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the United Nations work together to foster the interaction that is reflected in today's draft resolution.

This year marks the 125th anniversary of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and is therefore a suitable moment for renewing the commitment to cooperation between the United Nations, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and national parliaments. "Realizing the future we want for all", the report submitted to the Secretary-General by the United Nations System Task Team on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, emphasized the fact that participation, accountability and the rule of law make for a solid foundation for establishing inclusive paths to development.

I would like to conclude by affirming our support not only through our sponsorship of today's draft resolution, but also by acknowledging the splendid work done by the Permanent Mission of Morocco in putting it together.

Mr. Abdrakhmanov (Kazakhstan): My delegation is pleased to be a sponsor of draft resolution A/68/L.44, which is before us today. We believe that together with the United Nations, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) is critical to the implementation of multilateral agreements and reforms of global governance, since our current challenges are unprecedented in number and size. They transcend national borders and require multidimensional and multi-level action and synergies. International relations in a globalized world are complex and interconnected, and thus compel Governments and parliamentarians to take on greater responsibilities and duties. We would therefore like to discuss some of the major steps needed to achieve that dynamic partnership. I am very pleased that parliamentarians in the Republic of Kazakhstan are also active in these efforts.

The IPU and the United Nations can mutually strengthen their global roles by keeping national parliaments connected to topical international issues and abreast of United Nations decisions and resolutions. Parliaments are the builders of political will and the architects of future global policies through their functions of enacting national legislation, ensuring the implementation of international commitments and providing the legal foundations for and allocation of resources.

The IPU and national parliaments have addressed many issues that are on the agenda of the United Nations. The United Nations also has much to learn also from

parliaments and outstanding parliamentarians, many of whom are frequently our guests. We can facilitate the inclusion of a substantive parliamentary component in major international processes, especially when it comes to accelerating work on those Millennium Development Goal targets that have not yet been reached and on the post-2015 development agenda. With its parliament's participation, each country can formulate a development strategy that results in a decision with the potential to become law.

The entire United Nations system could gain from the development of a parliamentary dimension in the work of its agencies, funds and programmes, with country teams on the ground working closely with national and even local parliaments on national development strategies and aid effectiveness. International law, including the Charter of the United Nations, international humanitarian and human rights law, and the rule of law at the national level, represents the other side of the same coin, and it is a country's parliament that enables its society to benefit from all of them. These processes can be facilitated by events in which the United Nations and the IPU participate jointly.

The IPU and parliaments can make a unique contribution to the work of the Human Rights Council and its universal periodic review, and to special organs of the United Nations, providing input for national reports and receiving findings for consideration and action, thus ensuring enhanced outcomes. Parliaments can also provide the legal and fiscal environment so necessary for implementing United Nations programmes. We also believe that parliamentarians in developing countries, too, need not merely be beneficiaries of capacity-building or development aid but can themselves become strong players in the process of democratic governance through country-level dialogues.

The IPU and national parliaments can help develop democracy, fight impunity and work on many issues connected to the work of the International Criminal Court and the Security Council and its subsidiary organs. Parliamentarians, like religious leaders, can also be instrumental in promoting peace and tolerance among all cultures and religions. My country and its President, Mr. Nursultan Nazarbayev, as an initiator of the Congress of World and Traditional Religions, continue to welcome support on behalf of our parliamentarians for implementing that noble initiative.

In closing, my delegation urges that the draft resolution before the Assembly today be supported unanimously. I reiterate Kazakhstan's readiness to strengthen the robust interaction between the United Nations and parliamentary processes in order to achieve our common global objectives.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 57/32 of 19 November 2002, I now give the floor to the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Mr. Abdelwahad Radi.

Mr. Radi (Inter-Parliamentary Union) (*spoke in French*): I am honoured to speak here today on strengthening interaction among the United Nations, national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), over which I have the pleasure and honour to preside.

With a membership of 164 national parliaments, the IPU is today the only truly global organization of parliaments. The IPU, which will soon be celebrating its one hundred and twenty-fifth anniversary, is also the oldest multilateral organization. It was established in 1889 to seek peace and democracy as a way to avoid war. It was therefore a precursor of the United Nations, which emerged in the aftermath of the Second World War. We therefore undoubtedly share common ideals and goals.

The relationship between our two organizations was formally cemented in 1996 with the signing of a cooperation agreement. Since then, I am pleased to say that the United Nations and the IPU have developed a mutually beneficial relationship that, I have no doubt, will only grow stronger.

We live in a world today where peace, democracy and development have never been so close, and yet they continue to elude so many. The United Nations itself is being challenged by developments beyond its control. New forums, networks and social media are making governance a more complex endeavour than ever before, at both national and global levels. While crucial issues such as nuclear disarmament are still unresolved, other larger threats have emerged, not least of which is climate change.

Nevertheless, faced with all those upheavals, one thing is clear: the United Nations must remain at the centre of global governance. For that to be possible, national parliaments must first play an enhanced role in ensuring that what is decided in this Hall is useful to

citizens as a whole and reflects their views and deepest aspirations and, secondly, ensure that those decisions are carried out at the national level. That is the purpose of the relationship between our two organizations.

The draft resolution (A/68/L.44) that is before us today and the report of the Secretary-General (A/68/827) reflect that flourishing relationship. They demonstrate tangible progress in our relationship in just two years in virtually all areas, but also the need for much more to be done.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all of those who spoke today in support of our common cause. I would like to give a few examples of how our work together can make a difference for citizens, particularly as we approach 2015, when a new global agenda for development will be adopted.

In closely monitoring the United Nations-led process, the IPU has brought the global debate on the future development agenda to parliaments. From those discussions, we have developed strong positions on the need for a new development model centred on human well-being, and not on all-out economic growth; on the critical need to aim for democratic governance as an element of overall development, and not just as an aspect of sustainable development; and, finally, on the need for a comprehensive goal on gender equality and women's empowerment. Each of those elements is a key to help open the door to more opportunities, greater freedom and human rights for all. We have made our case before the Open-ended Working Group of the Economic and Social Council and in other discussions that took place here in New York. We also call on our members to engage directly with the Governments of their respective countries.

Do not misunderstand me: it is not the intention of the IPU to tell the United Nations what to do. Far from it. Our goal is simply to make sure that parliaments are fully aware of what is at stake here before decisions are taken, and that they can discuss the issues among themselves and with their Government representatives so that, when the time comes, our countries can take full ownership of the choices that were made.

Furthermore, once a decision is made, on the post-2015 development agenda or any decision, it must be implemented. In that regard too the role of parliaments is essential. After all, they are the ones that hold Governments accountable for the commitments they have undertaken at the United Nations, and they adopt the necessary legislation to make them a reality, namely, through the budget process.

Accountability is not self-evident, especially to those who are held to account and who tend to show some resistance. Yet it is the only way to ensure that commitments are honoured. It is the role of parliaments to strictly monitor Government action, and we should support them in that role. The IPU is doing its best to strengthen the capacities of parliaments around the world, and, of course, the United Nations is doing that too, particularly through the United Nations Development Programme.

But the needs of parliaments far outweigh our ability to assist them. We will need a much more concerted effort by the donor community and other partners to unleash parliaments' full potential and to enable them to perform their legislative and oversight roles everywhere. The United Nations can support that effort by asking its country teams to work more closely with parliaments — for example, by ensuring parliaments are involved in national review processes and post-conflict political dialogues.

Thanks to the increasingly widespread practice at the United Nations of carrying out national reviews — such as those done by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Universal Periodic Review of the Human Rights Council and, soon, the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development — it is now possible for parliaments to contribute to making accountability at the national level a reality at the global level. The practice of having parliaments discuss the reports that Governments present at the United Nations, and of allowing parliamentarians to participate in the actual reviews and then to report back thereon to their colleagues and to facilitate the monitoring and implementation of the recommendations that emerge from those reviews, may well become one of best ways to involve parliaments in the work of the United Nations.

To facilitate the work ahead and advance our relationship, the IPU has taken two important initiatives, both of which are reflected in today's draft resolution. The first initiative, which is institutional in nature, is the establishment of the Inter-Parliamentary Union Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs as a central coordinating body to help mainstream the United Nations agenda through the IPU and its member parliaments. That unique structure should help to

provide a critical perspective on global issues and to facilitate their discussion within national parliaments.

The second initiative is the convening of the fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament, which, as the draft resolution mentions, will take place in New York next year just before the United Nations summit that will mark the start of a new era for sustainable development.

The Conference of Speakers will provide a golden opportunity to stimulate the political will for the new global agenda and, more generally, for our respective members — Governments and parliaments — to unite towards achieving our common objectives in a spirit of partnership and mutual respect. It would be useful for the Conference to be acknowledged in the modalities resolution for the United Nations summit.

This statement is very likely my last before the General Assembly as President of the IPU. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to warmly thank the Permanent Mission of my country, Morocco, for the immense support that it has given us over the past three years. I also wish to again thank the sponsors of the draft resolution and all those who have worked behind the scenes, namely, United Nations and IPU staff, my colleagues around the world and everyone who, in their own way, whether on a small or large scale, strives for the good of us all.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/68/L.44, entitled "Interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union".

I shall give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution, in addition to those delegations listed in the document, the following countries have also become sponsors of draft resolution A/68/L.44: Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, China, Cyprus, El Salvador, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Lichtenstein, Montenegro, Pakistan, Palau, Panama, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Thailand, Uganda, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United Republic of Tanzania, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe.

The Acting President: May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/68/L.44?

Draft resolution A/68/L.44 was adopted (resolution 68/272).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 126?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.

United Nations A/68/PV.87

General Assembly
Sixty-eighth session

Official Records

87th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 20 May 2014, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ashe ..... (Antigua and Barbuda)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 7 (*continued*)

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items

The President: Members will recall that the Assembly concluded its consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 65 at its 70th plenary meeting, on 18 December 2013. In order for the Assembly to take action on the draft resolution, it will be necessary to reopen consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 65. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to reopen consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 65?

It was so decided.

The President: Members will recall that at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 20 September 2013, the General Assembly decided to allocate sub-item (a) of agenda item 65 to the Third Committee. To enable the General Assembly to take action expeditiously on the document, may I also take it that the Assembly wishes to consider sub-item (a) of agenda item 65 directly in plenary meeting and proceed immediately to its consideration?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 65 (*continued*)

Promotion and protection of the rights of children

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children

Draft resolution (A/68/L.46)

The President: I call on the representative of Sweden to introduce draft resolution A/68/L.46.

Mr. Grunditz (Sweden): I have the pleasure to introduce draft resolution A/68/L.46, entitled "High-level meeting of the General Assembly on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child", on behalf of Botswana, Jordan, Mexico, Poland, Thailand and Sweden, as well as more than 52 sponsors representing all regions.

The draft resolution seeks to establish the modalities of a high-level meeting to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by the General Assembly on 20 November. The Convention on the Rights of the Child is recognized as the international standard in the promotion and protection of the rights of the child, as illustrated by its almost universal ratification. We are therefore very pleased that the membership of the United Nations has so positively supported the prospect of dedicating a one-day meeting of the General Assembly to that important topic.

On behalf of the core group, we would like to thank all delegations for their contributions to the fruitful and productive discussions on the draft resolution, both in open informal consultations and bilateral contacts. We

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appreciate all efforts that contributed to the constructive negotiating atmosphere. The commemorative event in November represents an opportunity to once again reaffirm our common dedication to the realization of the rights of the child. We look forward to the support of members today.

The President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/68/L.46.

I shall now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): In connection with draft resolution A/68/L.46, entitled "High-level meeting of the General Assembly on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child", I wish to put on record the following statement of financial implications on behalf of the Secretary-General, in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

Under the terms of paragraph 1 of draft resolution A/68/L.46, the General Assembly would decide to convene a high-level meeting on 20 November on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and that the high-level meeting will comprise an opening plenary meeting and an interactive panel discussion with the meaningful participation of children.

Pursuant to the request contained in paragraph 1 of the draft resolution, it is envisaged that the high-level meeting will comprise a total of two meetings on 20 November 2014, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. The morning opening plenary meeting will require interpretation and verbatim reporting in all six languages, which will be covered by the meetings entitlement of the General Assembly. On the understanding that the General Assembly will not meet in parallel, the meeting will not constitute additions to the meetings workload of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management.

The interactive panel discussion in the afternoon will require one meeting with interpretation in all six languages, which will constitute an addition to the meetings workload of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management. That would entail additional requirements in the amount of $11,500 for meeting servicing for the biennium 2014-2015.

No documentation is anticipated related to the request contained in paragraph 1.

In summary, should the General Assembly adopt draft resolution A/68/L.46, additional requirements of $11,500 would arise under section 2, "General Assembly and Economic and Social Council Affairs and Conference Management", which would be met from within the existing approved resources of the programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/68/L.46, entitled "High-level meeting of the General Assembly on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child".

I shall now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution, in addition to those delegations listed in the document, the following countries have also become sponsors of draft resolution A/68/L.46: Argentina, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Tunisia, Turkey, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uruguay and Viet Nam.

The President: May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/68/L.46?

Draft resolution A/68/L.46 was adopted (resolution 68/273).

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 65.

The meeting rose at 10.20 a.m.

United Nations A/68/PV.88

General Assembly
Sixty-eighth session

Official Records

88th plenary meeting
Friday, 23 May 2014 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ashe ..... (Antigua and Barbuda)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Tommo Monthe (Cameroon), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 115 (*continued*)

Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections

(a) Election of seven members of the Committee for Programme and Coordination

Note by the Secretary-General (A/68/302/Add.2)

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): Pursuant to General Assembly decision 42/450, of 17 December 1987, and upon nomination by the Economic and Social Council, the Assembly elects the members of the Committee for Programme and Coordination.

Members will recall that at its 40th plenary meeting, held on 30 October 2013, the General Assembly elected five members to the Committee for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2014. Members will also recall that, at its 61st plenary meeting, held on 6 December 2013, the Assembly elected Morocco as a member of the Committee for Programme and Coordination for a three-year term beginning on 1 January 2014 and expiring on 31 December 2016. Members will further recall that by its decision 2013/201 E of 7 November 2013, the Economic and Social Council postponed the nomination of one member from the Asia-Pacific States for a three-year term beginning on 1 January 2014 and expiring on 31 December 2016.

In that connection, the Assembly has before it a note by the Secretary-General contained in document A/68/302/Add.2. As indicated in that document, by its decision 2014/201 A of 23 April 2014, the Economic and Social Council nominated the Republic of Korea for election by the General Assembly for a term beginning on the date of election and expiring on 31 December 2016.

In accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure, all elections should be held by secret ballot and there shall be no nominations. However, I should like to recall paragraph 16 of General Assembly decision 34/401, whereby the practice of dispensing with the secret ballot for elections to subsidiary organs when the number of candidates corresponds to the number of seats to be filled should become standard, unless a delegation specifically requests a vote on a given election. In the absence of such a request, may I take it that the Assembly decides to proceed to the election on the basis of dispensing with the secret ballot?

It was so decided.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): May I therefore take it that the Assembly wishes to declare the Republic of Korea elected as a member of the Committee for Programme and Coordination for a term of office beginning on 23 May 2014 and expiring on 31 December 2016?

It was so decided.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): Members are reminded that the Economic and Social Council

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decided to further postpone the nomination of three members from Western European and other States for election by the General Assembly: two members for terms beginning on the date of election and expiring on 31 December 2014, and one member for a term beginning on the date of election and expiring on 31 December 2015.

The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 115.

Agenda item 7 (*continued*)

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The General Assembly will now turn to sub-item (a) of agenda item 23, "Implementation of the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008-2017)", in order to hold a meeting on the overall theme, "Achieving poverty eradication through full employment and decent work for all in the post-2015 development agenda", in accordance with resolutions 63/230 of 19 December 2008, 67/224 of 21 December 2012 and 68/226 of 20 December 2013.

Members will recall that the Assembly concluded its consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 23 at its 71st plenary meeting on 20 December 2013. In order for the Assembly to hold the meeting on the overall theme "Achieving poverty eradication through full employment and decent work for all in the post-2015 development agenda", it will be necessary to reopen consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 23.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to reopen consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 23?

It was so decided.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): Members will further recall that at its 2nd plenary meeting on 20 September 2013, the General Assembly decided to allocate sub-item (a) of agenda item 23 to the Second Committee.

In order to proceed to hold the meeting, may I also take it that the Assembly wishes to consider sub-item (a) of agenda item 23 directly in plenary meeting and proceed immediately to its consideration?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 23 (*continued*)

Eradication of poverty and other development issues

(a) Implementation of the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008-2017)

Meeting on achieving poverty eradication through full employment and decent work for all in the post-2015 development agenda

The Acting President: This morning, it is my distinct pleasure to deliver this statement on behalf of the President of the General Assembly, who very much regrets that he is not able to be here with us.

"Poverty eradication has been at the heart of the United Nations development agenda since the adoption of the Millennium Declaration in 2000 (resolution 55/2). That paramount goal will continue to guide us as we craft a new agenda for the post-2015 era. Therefore it is both fitting and, indeed, necessary that today we gather for this high-level meeting of the General Assembly on "Achieving poverty eradication through full employment and decent work for all in the post-2015 development agenda".

"Our meeting today contributes to the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008-2017), as mandated by General Assembly resolution 68/226. The resolution repeatedly reminds us that poverty eradication is a matter of urgency, and 'an ethical, social, political and economic imperative of all humankind'. There is no greater task or immediate priority before the global community.

"During this one-day session, we will look both back and forward. We will aim to assess and share best practices from past and ongoing work and, at the same time, look towards future expectations and opportunities related to the post-2015 development agenda.

"Collectively mobilizing around the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) has focused our efforts on reducing poverty worldwide and produced commendable and noteworthy progress. The most recent World Bank estimates confirm that the MDG target on poverty was achieved at the global level in 2010, five years before

the target date. Since 1990, 700 million people have been lifted out of extreme poverty. However, not all have benefited from this progress, which has been uneven, both within and among countries. Poverty remains high and persistent in many parts of the world, with approximately 1.2 billion people still living on less than $1.25 a day, most of them in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

"With the deadline for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals just around the corner, and Member States in the process of shaping a strong post-2015 development agenda, our efforts towards poverty eradication are at a critical juncture. We must focus on completing the unfinished business of the MDGs and addressing new and emerging challenges. Yet the work we do will be lasting and irreversible only if the agenda is crafted and implemented in a holistic manner, incorporating economic, social and environmental dimensions. If post-2015 development is to be sustainable, we have to address a number of critical issues, many of which the Assembly will discuss today.

"As recognized by the theme of today's event, some of the greatest challenges to poverty eradication are related to high unemployment, rampant underemployment and informality, as well as rising inequality in many countries. There is widespread recognition that sustained, inclusive and job-rich growth is a prerequisite for reducing poverty. Given the lasting impacts of the global financial and economic crisis, and the largely jobless recovery, inclusive growth and employment should be at the centre of the new development framework.

"Promoting industrial development and economic diversification, as well as growth in agricultural productivity and investments in infrastructure development, can help create more and better jobs, and ultimately reduce poverty. Greater coherence among macroeconomic, trade and social policies is another important element.

"For people living in poverty, labour is often their main asset. Engaging in productive employment and decent work empowers them with the means to improve their lives. Workers holding a decent job are not only personally but also socially empowered, giving them a voice that enables their active participation in decision-making that affects their well-being. Young people in particular are increasingly struggling to enter the labour market and youth unemployment rates are at an all-time high.

"The burdens of poverty also carry certain prejudices and biases with them. We hear about the feminization of poverty. We know certain groups are more vulnerable to falling into poverty and that specific circumstances are more likely to foster it. Ongoing discussions on the post-2015 agenda have recognized the damaging consequences of increasing inequality between and within countries, and that future strategies must strive to include all members of society and contribute towards shared prosperity.

"Growing inequality between rural and urban areas and among social groups undermines growth and social cohesion, and makes it harder for people and families to break the cycle of poverty. It compromises the health, nutrition and education of large sections of society, as well as limiting job prospects and participation in social, political and economic life for persons and communities in disadvantaged situations. It has also led to the consistent exclusion of women, persons with disabilities, older persons, youth and indigenous peoples, among others.

"Consultations on drawing up the post-2015 development agenda have therefore emphasized the importance of implementing social protection measures with a focus on the most marginalized groups. Ensuring the equality of economic opportunity and building the resilience of the poor to natural disasters have also featured prominently. However, for such transformations to take root, social, economic and political institutions must be inclusive and accountable, and promote transparent and participatory decision-making.

"The multifaceted nature of poverty is complex and intricate, but I hope I have given the Assembly some ideas for consideration today. I am sure Members will have many of their own to add.

"Before concluding, let me highlight the format of today's meeting. The morning is reserved for the General Assembly formal meeting and members will have the opportunity to express their views and comments. In the afternoon, members are invited to participate in an interactive, multi-stakeholder

panel discussion, followed by a brief closing segment. Members' valuable ideas, out-of-the-box thinking and shared experiences will all bring us closer to resolving an urgent and pressing problem. The burdens of poverty must not be borne by the poor alone."

(*spoke in French*)

I should like to remind Members that statements in the national capacity should be limited to three minutes. When speaking on behalf of a group, statements should not exceed five minutes.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The Group would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for his engagement on the post-2015 development agenda.

The Group of 77 and China attaches great importance to the post-2015 development agenda, which must be in accordance with the principles and dimensions of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), "The future we want" (resolution 66/288).

The Group of 77 and China recognizes that poverty is an affront to human dignity and stresses that poverty eradication is the greatest global challenge facing the world today and indispensable to sustainable development. The Group attaches the highest priority to poverty eradication in the post-2015 United Nations development agenda being supported by renewed, effective and adequate means of implementation and strengthened global partnership for development, which entails, among other objectives, the promotion of employment and decent work for all. In this regard, we recall the importance of addressing the multiple dimensions of poverty. In order to ensure effective poverty eradication, the interlinkages between the multidimensional aspects of poverty must take into account the different national circumstances of countries.

The Group of 77 and China strongly believes that employment is a leading determinant of social and economic growth and development. We therefore emphasize that it is necessary to address inequalities both within and among countries in order to reduce poverty. While robust and stable economic growth is necessary to reduce poverty, it is not sufficient in and of itself. Economic growth must be sustainable, inclusive and equitable, and create full employment and decent work and livelihood opportunities for all, especially the poor and vulnerable members of society. Most importantly, the benefits and opportunities of economic growth must be shared among and extended to include vulnerable and minority groups in society.

The employment-generating capacity of growth strategies is essential for achieving sustainable, sustained and inclusive economic growth, which when fairly distributed, can bring millions of people out of poverty worldwide. Despite a decline in the number of the working poor — namely, those employed but living below the $2-per-day poverty line — the majority of workers in the developing world remain in informal and vulnerable jobs. The Rio+20 outcome recognizes the promotion of full and productive employment and decent work for all as a key priority.

The Group also believes that employment objectives need to become central to global actions and mechanisms. These objectives need the support of international cooperation that assists developing countries, first, through actions at the level of international economic, financial, trade, technology and social systems to support and enable developing countries' efforts; and, secondly, by developed countries' refraining from actions by that create barriers to developing countries' efforts and progress. The Group also understands that employment goals and targets should be geared to providing young people and women with skills for jobs. Within the broader objective of full employment and decent work, there should also be a global strategy, consisting of active policies and targets, to secure productive employment for both women and youth.

In this framework, the Group of 77 and China is sure that a positive outcome will result from this meeting and highly encourages the participants to take into account the position of the Group for further discussions under this topic.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Beviglia Zampetti (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States.

Let me first recall our commitment to engaging with all partners towards a post-2015 development agenda

that should reinforce the international community's commitment to poverty eradication and sustainable development and set out a single comprehensive and coherent framework for effective delivery and results at all levels. We need to work towards sustainable development to eradicate poverty in all its dimensions, including ending extreme poverty in a single generation, and to ensure the sustainable prosperity and well-being of all people within the planetary boundaries. With regard to the specific theme of today's high-level meeting, let me share the following key messages.

Poverty eradication, the reduction of inequalities and shared prosperity for all are key parts of the internal and external dimension of EU policies. While substantial progress has been made, the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals has been unevenly distributed, not only among countries but also within countries. The benefits of economic growth have not always been adequately shared. Simply lifting national averages does not guarantee eradication of poverty, which remains a pressing global and national challenge. We must strive to leave no one behind, involving and delivering progress for all social groups and income quintiles, and secure equality of opportunity for all women and men. We resolve to target the most vulnerable, and among and within developing countries, those who have been left farthest behind.

Addressing discrimination and inequalities through a human rights-based approach will be essential. Unemployment, precarious employment, access to basic services and social protection, access to human development services, productive resources and an inadequate standard of living are still of universal concern. Decent work, productive jobs and social protection are key elements for ensuring basic living standards and driving inclusive and sustainable growth. Not all jobs are decent and productive jobs.

Increasing productivity can raise living standards and reduce working poverty and vulnerable employment. In particular, we need a better understanding and measurement of the quality of work, taking into account pay, working conditions, health and safety, form of employment — whether formal or informal — and social security arrangements. We further emphasize the importance of paying wages that allow workers to live in dignity as well as ensuring equal pay for equal work. Consideration should also be given to how best to incorporate the respect for the fundamental principles and rights at work.

We also stress the importance of tackling unemployment — in particular youth unemployment and inactivity, which have reached unprecedented levels in many countries — and of promoting decent work for young people. This can be done notably through the promotion of and equal access to quality education for girls and boys, including vocational training, the promotion of green jobs, access to basic economic services, the creation of an enabling environment for the private sector, and inclusive and sustainable industrial development. We are convinced that the International Labour Organization (ILO) Call for Action on Youth Employment and the ILO Global Jobs Pact give useful recommendations, and we call on Governments to put them into practice.

We are committed to implementing ILO Recommendation No. 202 concerning national floors for social protection, in particular increasing the coverage of social protection floors and gradual implementation of higher standards of social guarantees. Social protection lies at the heart of the European social model. It is an investment in human development and inclusive sustainable economic growth. Social protection systems can successfully promote higher labour market participation, both through active labour market measures and protection against vulnerability and social risk, which provide the level of social security that all people need in order to enhance their livelihoods.

Everyone has the right to social security, as stated in article 22 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Social protection is key to reducing inequalities and ensuring that those beneficiaries who can are enabled to participate in productive economic activity and employment. Social protection focused on women has notably proven to be particularly positive for family welfare. By providing income security, universal and non-discriminatory access to social services and care, it contributes to tackling inequalities and reducing poverty and to a better management of risks and economic and life cycle shocks.

The role of trade union and employers' organizations and of social dialogue, one of the four pillars of decent work, needs to be given greater recognition, as provided for by the fundamental principles and rights at work promoted by the ILO.

Finally, let me underline the close interlinkages between today's themes and gender equality and the

empowerment of women, including at the political level, as well as the particular situation of persons with disabilities. Special efforts need to be made to ensure women's equal access to employment opportunities and their full participation in the labour force.

Let me also stress the role of civil society organizations, including social partners. They have the capacity to empower, represent, defend and reach out to vulnerable or socially excluded groups. They can also encourage economic and human development as well as social cohesion and innovation. Moreover, those organizations often engage in initiatives to advance participatory democracy for transparent, accountable and legitimate governance, including in fragile situations.

Mr. Zinsou (Benin): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the least developed countries (LDCs). The group of least developed countries associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Bolivia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The group of LDCs commends the President of the General Assembly for organizing today's high-level event focusing on a key priority area for LDCs in the context of the sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda. The group wishes to again articulate its position that poverty eradication should remain the first and overarching priority of the post-2015 development agenda.

We are happy to recognize that the poverty reduction target has been achieved globally. However, in the LDCs, more than 47 per cent of the population are still living in extreme poverty, while, as per the target set forth in the related Millennium Development Goal (MDG), that figure should have been reduced to 32 per cent. The absolute number of poor people has increased in many LDCs even during the periods of sustained economic growth and rapid poverty reduction in many parts of the world. According to an estimate by the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, the number of the extreme poor living in the LDCs, out of the total global poor, increased from 19 per cent in the 1990-1995 period to 30 per cent during the 2005-2010 period.

Such high poverty concentration is expected to be further worsened by projected high population growth. The population of LDCs is expected to nearly double and increase to 1.8 billion between now and 2050 and to 2.9 billion by 2100. Although the LDCs comprise only 12 per cent of the world population, they will account for almost 40 per cent of the global population growth during the next 40 years.

In LDCs, the high economic growth of the past decade has not translated into corresponding levels of employment generation. Therefore, their unemployment rates remain at a higher band range. A study by the International Labour Organization suggests that, in order to achieve MDG 1, LDCs needed a rate of employment growth of 7 per cent and a 2.9 per cent per annum rate of growth over the years 2000-2009.

Full employment and decent work, especially for youth and women, through sustained economic growth and productive capacity-building is vitally important for LDCs to address their poverty. That is the goal being pursued by the Ministerial Conference on New Partnerships for Productive Capacity-building in the LDCs, scheduled to take place in Cotonou from 28 to 31 July 2014. Economic growth should be inclusive and employment-generating. Strong support needs to be extended to micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises. Innovative programmes such as employment guarantee schemes can provide poor workers with a minimum employment floor. The introduction of a basic set of essential social transfers and services, as well as access to credit and finance, can also lead to full employment and decent work for all. LDCs need enhanced international support to build their productive capacities to reach the goal of full employment and decent work.

The group of LDCs is of the view that in the area of international support for poverty eradication, the priority should be guided by the following four key principles.

First, although the absolute number is important, the primary consideration should be the percentage figure, which is statistically more significant. In LDCs, 47 per cent of the population lives below the poverty line, compared to 20 per cent in other developing countries.

Secondly, with regard to countries' capacities to deal with the challenges by themselves, despite sincere efforts the low levels of per capita income, domestic savings and investment and a small tax base limit our domestic resource mobilization efforts considerably. In

2011, the average gross domestic product per capita in LDCs was $800, compared to $4,650 in middle-income countries. For a number of LDCs, more than 75 per cent of their development depends on external support.

Thirdly, with respect to the trends in poverty reduction over the years, we have set forth the scenario on other occasions. The LDCs are stricken by multiple vulnerabilities that constrain their efforts to raise the living standards of their populations. Their problems are systemic in nature and should be addressed as such.

Fourthly, as to countries' initial endowments and characteristics in terms of resources, institutions and pervasive challenges, LDCs are at the top rung of the ladder in terms of challenges and at the bottom rung in terms of capacity.

In the light of those principles, the group would like to stress that the LDCs have a longer way to go than others to reach the target of poverty eradication and to secure full and productive employment and decent work for all. We therefore reiterate our call for the adoption of a universal principle of differential and preferential treatment for LDCs. That is an imperative principle to enable LDCs to achieve the goals and targets of the Istanbul Programme of Action and of the post-2015 development agenda.

Mr. Molinas Vega (Paraguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): The goal of eradicating poverty through employment is the top priority of the Government of the Republic of Paraguay. The success achieved in reducing extreme poverty by 2015 has made it clear that decent employment is the primary factor in reducing extreme poverty. More than 85 per cent of cases in which extreme poverty has been overcome in many countries have been documented as being the direct result of an increase in the employment rate.

What can we learn from the experience of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) process, and how can we apply what we have learned to the post-2015 development agenda? One first point, certainly, is that having global development goals helps to focus national policies on areas that are of central importance, such as the reduction of extreme poverty, among others. Also, reviewing the results achieved in the implementation of the MDGs shows that perhaps we should be more ambitious in our goals of reducing extreme poverty or providing a minimum level of welfare for countries. The fact that we, as the global community, have achieved one MDG five years ahead of the deadline may be an indication of the fact that our goals have been very conservative.

In that respect, we should not only measure the goals for reducing extreme poverty at the international level, such as by adopting the indicator of $1.25 per person per day, but also include indicators that reflect the numbers of those living in poverty at the national level. In Latin America, national figures for those living in poverty are almost double the international figures. That means that to complement the international indicator with an indicator that takes into account national poverty figures, we must be more rigorous and raise the bar for the well-being of our people. In Paraguay's specific case, we met the goal of reducing extreme poverty by 50 per cent several years ago according to the international indicator, but we have not yet reached that goal according to our more rigorous national poverty indicator, although we are close to doing so.

What are the transformative changes that we must make in order to further reduce poverty in this new stage and successfully eradicate it? We believe that there must be at least three transformative changes made at the global level.

First, we need to emphasize early child development. Nothing is more worthwhile and strategic than investing in the first 1,000 days after conception. That investment in human capital will provide the highest rate of return, years later, when those people enter the workforce. The eradication of poverty with decent employment for all requires the universalization, as of now, of comprehensive policies to support early childhood development, in particular in the first 1,000 days.

The second transformative change must be quality education for all. In today's world, it is crucial to be able to apply basic math and science in solving daily problems and to be able to communicate effectively. If we do not eradicate functional illiteracy, we will not be able to eradicate poverty through decent employment.

The third transformative change, which is key, must focus on the promotion of creativity, entrepreneurship and innovation. Having a quality educational system certainly helps, but it is not enough. There is a need to bring the private sector and the educational system into a synergetic relationship that provides the catalyst for entrepreneurship and innovation.

How can we achieve those three transformative changes? Of course, there are no policies that function

the same way and are equally effective in every part of the world, but most likely there are elements in public policy formulation that can indeed be made more universal. In that respect, we need high-quality public policy. We would identify three elements that we believe to be essential to the quality of public policy. Such policies must be transparent, credible and predictable. They must have quality information and provide free access to it, create accountability processes and promote citizens' participation, and comply with contracts and agreements. All of that is essential to achieving the transformative changes needed for poverty eradication. Having a system that allows us to precisely identify the vulnerable populations in each context and in each country is also crucial, and to that end we need to know exactly who those vulnerable people are, by first and last name and location, so that we can get the needed comprehensive assistance to them.

Lastly, public policy needs to be based on and inspired by solidarity. At the domestic level, that means a strong commitment to vulnerable groups, and at the international level, it means a strong commitment to the relatively less developed countries and landlocked countries.

Mr. McLeod (Trinidad and Tobago): On behalf of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, I would like to congratulate the President of the General Assembly on convening this important event, which is integral to our continued discussions of elements to be considered in shaping the post-2015 development agenda.

Trinidad and Tobago is pleased to contribute to this high-level plenary meeting, which focuses, among other things, on decent work, which is one of the pillars and drivers of the work of ministries of labour. The importance of decent work as a mechanism that contributes to poverty eradication and full employment cannot be overemphasized. It is my honour, as Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development of Trinidad and Tobago, to share our position with respect to alleviating poverty through full employment and decent and productive work.

Consistent with the principle that poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere, which is embedded in the 1944 Declaration of Philadelphia of the International Labour Organization, and which is still relevant today, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is committed to achieving prosperity for all through people-centred development, so that no-one is left behind.

As a small island developing State confronting the challenges with which, I am sure, we are all familiar and which have been amplified by the effects of the global economic and financial crisis, Trinidad and Tobago is committed not only to growth, but to inclusive growth, which is characterized not only by full employment, but by sustainable employment and quality jobs. In that regard, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has fully embraced the decent work agenda and its four strategic pillars of job creation: rights at work, social protection and social dialogue, with gender equality as a cross-cutting objective, given its potential for effectively linking economic growth and poverty eradication.

I have emphasized at the ILO that there can be no development without labour and no labour without development. A synergistic and symbiotic relationship exists between the two. If as a global community we are to adopt effective poverty eradication measures, then issues related to employment, jobs, income, social protection, rights at work — in essence, decent work — must be a common goal to which our countries must aspire.

As the discussions on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda progress, we continue to support the position of the International Labour Organization in favour of the inclusion of full employment and decent work as goals of the global development agenda. Indeed, we support all efforts, such as this high-level discussion, to promote understanding of the concept and appreciation of the need for policy coherence in respect of labour and labour-related matters, economic growth, and human and social development.

I wish to underscore the importance of labour in global development and the key role of decent work in poverty alleviation and the promotion of human dignity. As we continue to focus on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda, let us not forget that the human dimension remains the most critical factor and should be the bedrock of our approach to sustainable development.

Mr. Magid (Israel): Today, around 1 billion people still live in extreme poverty. These are 1 billion men, women and children around the world who are forced to make difficult daily choices between food, medicine, housing and education. For far too many, water is as much a luxury as a source of life. Education is a privilege and brighter futures are almost impossible to

imagine. Extreme poverty is more than a lack of income and opportunity; it is the denial of basic human dignity.

The Millennium Development Goals have shown that we have the power to change that reality. In recent years, poverty rates at the global level have been halved. Working together, we are succeeding in doing what the United Nations was created to do — improving the lives of hundreds of millions of people. Poverty is multidimensional and must be tackled in a holistic manner. It cuts across every issue we tackle at the United Nations, from peace and security to the environment to gender equality. Fortunately, that means that progress in any one of those areas improves the prospects of emerging from poverty, but it also means that if we fail to address even one of those issues, our efforts will certainly fall short of what is possible.

No country, rich or poor, can afford to waste its human resources. Unemployment is surely the greatest waste of those resources, and generating jobs is the most direct way to combat extreme poverty. Youth unemployment poses the most recognizable risk. With few productive options, criminal activities tempt the young, which has a negative impact on the social fabric. Providing high-quality, relevant education is a critical factor for improving employment prospects for youth. It is a long-term investment, but one that ultimately pays. Investing in promoting women's employment is also critical. Research shows that when women are economically empowered, entire nations benefit. When women earn an income, they invest heavily in their children's schooling and health, creating a positive ripple effect across communities.

The Israeli experience shows that human capital is the greatest natural resource. Israel has a very diverse society, and we understand both the challenges and the importance of giving each person the opportunity to contribute according to his or her abilities, regardless of background. Israel has a practical approach to employment and empowerment by using proven strategies and technical, hands-on training to provide people with decent work. One initiative provides specialized second-chance university preparatory courses to disadvantaged populations, including Israeli Arabs, Ethiopian immigrants, persons with disabilities and youths who have grown up in the child welfare system.

Israel considers entrepreneurs to be the backbones of any economy. Israel's foreign assistance programme focuses on teaching entrepreneurship skills and on vocational training. From intensive courses in aquaculture to courses in micro- and small-business enterprise development, Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation, MASHAV, has been working to sustainably reduce poverty around the world for over half a century. Israel's activities around the globe are guided by the belief that capacity-building activities are the best way to achieve maximum impact in development programmes. Education leads to empowerment, the surest guarantee of sustainable growth.

We have the proof that the international community, acting in concert, can eradicate poverty. We must think boldly and creatively to deliver on that goal. If we are to realize a life of dignity for all, we must hear the voices and heed the calls of the most marginalized in our societies. Many of the solutions to poverty challenges can be found within the affected communities. Giving them voice and empowering them to solve the problems they face on a daily basis will be critical to achieving our goals and ensuring that no one is left behind.

Mr. Mukerji (India): The eradication of poverty and the promotion of full and productive employment for all are central challenges for the international community in the post-2015 development agenda. As world leaders reaffirmed in the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (resolution 66/288, annex), those two challenges are also closely interrelated.

As we set the stage for the post-2015 development agenda in this sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly, under the leadership of President Ashe, this debate if very timely. We have made impressive gains globally in the fight against poverty and deprivation over the past decade. My own country has contributed to this success in no small measure. Yet even as we speak, over 1.3 billion people, many of whom live in India, continue to live in extreme poverty. That amounts to one in every six people in the world.

Clearly, poverty is not only the greatest global challenge facing the world today; it is a problem that needs to be attacked more directly. Even as we try to address the challenge of sustainable development, we need to be cognizant of the fact that the eradication of poverty remains the overarching objective of the international community, and attention and resources should not be diverted away from that noble endeavour.

Full and productive employment is the surest way to eradicate poverty and give people control over their destinies. Generating employment and decent work is a prerequisite if developing countries are to harness their demographic dividend. Employment is also the bedrock of social inclusion. Robust and sustained economic growth needs to be accompanied by the equitable distribution of the benefits of that growth. That can be done through the creation of new and productive job opportunities for the growing labour force.

Unfortunately, the fragile recovery from the global financial crisis and the continual structural weaknesses in the economies of developing countries, coupled with unfavourable international factors, mean that the global employment situation continues to be precarious. There are millions more people unemployed today than a year ago. The problem of underemployment is also acute in many developing countries. The past few years have seen the phenomenon of jobless growth. It is imperative to reverse that trend so that more growth translates into more jobs.

A skilled workforce is a prerequisite for the achievement of our objective of rapid and inclusive growth. Pursuing policies for the vocational training and skilled development of workers is a key policy priority and is directly connected with improving the productivity, quality and income of the labour force. The transfer of empowering technology for development, especially for women, is a major initiative that the post-2015 development agenda can undertake.

At the national level, Governments need to focus equally on small and medium-sized enterprises, rural industries and the informal sector and to put in place a conducive policy environment and direct support for the growth of those sectors through technology upgrading, skills enhancement, credit support and marketing assistance. Scaled-up investment in the creation of infrastructure, which is a key priority for developing countries, can also translate into substantial job opportunities, in particular for the unskilled and semi-skilled labour force.

It is equally important to pursue policies for employment-led growth at the international level. Trade barriers, as well as unfair trading practices in the markets of developed countries, continue to have a deleterious effect on employment growth in developing countries. The destruction of livelihoods through the inability of farmers in many developing countries to compete, for example, as a result of trade distorting subsidies in the developed world, is well known. The need to make globalization more inclusive is more urgent than ever. It will therefore be important for the post-2015 develoment agenda to meaningful address international systemic issues, in particular the global trade, investment and finance rules, in order to make those rules fairer and more equitable and supportive of the efforts of developing countries to eradicate poverty and to promote full and productive employment.

International labour mobility in the area of high-end skills has become an important aspect of global integration across countries. In that context, the post-2015 development agenda must facilitate the movement of skilled workers from developing to developed countries. The post-2015 development agenda must also ensure adequate policy space for developing countries to pursue industrialization and inclusive growth, while taking into account their own national circumstances and challenges.

In conclusion, we need to develop an agenda for international cooperation that places a central and overarching emphasis on poverty eradication. It should also assist developing countries in their efforts to pursue inclusive growth that provides them adequate policy space for economic diversification and industrial development, while meaningfully addressing international systemic issues, so as to create a genuinely conducive environment for development.

Mrs. Lalic Smajevic (Serbia): Ever since their adoption, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have been high on the agenda of the Government of the Republic of Serbia. Serbia has embarked on a thorough social development process and has relied on the MDGs as guidelines in designing its national poverty reduction strategy. We have submitted MDG implementation progress reports on a regular basis.

In Serbia, poverty is regarded as a problem that must be tackled at its source. The design of our poverty reduction strategy is based on that premise and the issue of poverty has been placed within the broader framework of national development and European integration. Some significant progress has been achieved. Infant, child and maternal mortality rates, for instance, have decreased, while the compulsory school completion rate has remained consistently high.

Notwithstanding those achievements, not all segments of the population have benefited from such progress equally. Considerable discrepancies persist,

including disparities between the urban and the rural populations, the country's metropolitan and southern regions, those fit for work and persons with disabilities, and the rich and the poor. In 2008, for example, 98 per cent of the total population had received basic education and the secondary school enrolment rate was on the increase. However, about 15 per cent of young people aged between 15 and 19 years were left out of the education system.

Poverty eradication in Serbia reflects the worldwide trends of the pre- and post-crisis periods. By 2008, Serbia had attained its target of halving the number of poor people, as measured by the absolute poverty line. That went hand in hand with the reduction of unemployment until 2009. However, the situation deteriorated with the onset of the crisis. Unemployment and the number of poor people grew as a result of the crisis. Specific social groups are still affected by poverty to an above-average extent compared to the overall population.

Unemployment and inactivity remain the main causes of poverty and social exclusion across all segments of the population, yet some segments have been affected more severely than others. They include children, young people, the elderly — that is, those over 65 years of age — the rural population, persons without education, the Roma, refugees and internally displaced persons.

With regard to the achievement of the MDGs in Serbia, allow me to share some lessons learned in our work to date. A true national consensus has been reached on the achievement of the MDGs. Poverty reduction is regarded as a component of our wider development policy and of the European integration policy and process. Our country's poverty reduction strategy was developed through a participatory and consultative process that resulted in one document being implemented by four consecutive Governments. Strong coordination mechanisms, including increased planning, monitoring and reporting, were established, while each stakeholder — the Government, Parliament, local Governments, civil society organizations and international development partners, or donors — has been assigned its own task in the implementation of the strategy.

How can the MDGs be attained after 2015? First of all, society needs to have promising prospects. For Serbia, a European country, such prospects are provided by the European integration process. Secondly, the Goals should be incorporated into a clear and long-term plan and sustainable solutions applicable to the longer term and the principle of evidence-based policymaking should be observed. We must also channel the available funds and improve coordination among stakeholders. We need more synergy, coordination and cooperation and less competition among partners, in line with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

No Government can achieve that complex goal on its own. Its achievement depends on a strong partnership among civil society, the private sector, the media and other bodies. Poverty eradication, the achievement of full employment and social inclusion are challenges that require time and sometimes span several generations. Under the auspices of the United Nations, open consultations have been held in Serbia with the aim of identifying current worldwide problems and of proposing solutions. The consultations were held under the slogan "The world we want 2015" and should contribute to making the voices of citizens heard worldwide and to building strategic coalitions and partnerships that can help shape the post-2015 development agenda.

Serbia is among the 56 countries in which such consultations have taken place. Their goal was to define development directions and modalities for overcoming the emerging post-2015 global challenges. The discussions involved citizens, the private, public and civil sectors, politicians, the media and various organizations and institutions. In the quest to identify the said problems and render solutions in the post-2015 period, Serbia considers it is necessary to provide more and better jobs and decent employment; combat poverty and provide better support to vulnerable groups; ensure responsible governance and reliable institutions; create a culture of accountability, tolerance and social cohesion; provide higher-quality education, better health care and environmental conservation; ensure the equality of men and women; and regulate population migration and mobility.

Mr. Maksimychev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Russia welcomes the General Assembly's convening of this high-level meeting on achieving poverty eradication through full employment and decent work for all. Poverty eradication remains a primary priority and necessary condition to achieving sustainable development. As poverty is a multifaceted phenomenon, its causes cannot be ascribed solely to

low income. First and foremost, poverty reflects lack of opportunity.

The General Assembly's 2007 proclamation of the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008–2017) was of great importance to fostering the efforts of the international community towards halving the level of extreme poverty as set out in the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2). We believe that one of the most important strategic goals of the Decade is to achieve full employment and decent work for all.

As we approach the 2015 milestone, the international community is seeking to enhance efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) through enhanced effectiveness. Over the past five years, despite upheavals in the global financial and raw materials markets, the number of people living in dire poverty has fallen to record lows. Therefore, today we can speak of true successes resulting from the joint efforts of Governments, the United Nations system, civil society and other stakeholders. Nevertheless, the latest reports on achieving the MDGs speak of uneven progress in eliminating poverty. We consider it essential to step up multilateral efforts to assist regions that are lagging behind.

In the current circumstances, the issues of full employment and decent work in the framework of poverty elimination have been highlighted by intergovernmental cooperation. The Russian Federation is highly interested in actively participating in international efforts on labour, especially under the International Labour Organization. We are ready to undertake practical implementation efforts in ensuring decent work. We consider it important to strengthen coordination and mutual cooperation among all key partners, including the United Nations system, leading international organizations and regional integration organizations.

We call on countries to carry out comprehensive structural reforms as part of their macroeconomic and structural policies to foster the creation of productive employment and improved standards of living. We also consider it important to duly stress the importance of stimulating productive capacity, combating unemployment and creating decent work conditions in the context of achieving the elimination of poverty and achieving all-encompassing sustainability and equitable economic growth at all levels under the future global development agenda.

The Russian Federation affirms its commitment to international development cooperation and stands ready to engage constructively with a broad range of partners towards achieving the MDGs. Guided by the principles of solidarity and global partnership, we are gradually increasing our official development assistance, in line with the Government's international development assistance strategy, which was approved by Russian President Putin on 20 April.

Both independently and in cooperation with international organizations, including the United Nations system, Russia is implementing programmes and projects in food security, education, health care, establishing and strengthening the commercial and industrial capacity of recipient countries, environmental protection, and efficient governance. We continue to contribute significantly towards easing the external debt burden of the least developed countries. In 2013, Russian official development assistance was about $610 million. We shall continue to increase that assistance.

Mr. De Aguiar Patriota (Brazil): First of all, Brazil aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Chair of the Group of 77 and China, and wishes to make the following intervention in its national capacity.

We are at a crucial juncture in our collective efforts to overcome one of the greatest challenges facing humankind, which is the eradication of poverty and the generation of welfare for all, especially in the developing countries of the South. In Rio, we committed ourselves to achieving those objectives by fostering equitable economic development with social inclusion, while promoting the sustainable management of natural resources and ecosystems. The sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda should embody that new transformative model. Decent work stands out as a fundamental policy tool in that regard, not only because it provides income security, but also because of its social protection aspects.

Brazil's experience over the past decade proves that economic expansion and market forces alone cannot provide a solution to poverty eradication and the creation of decent jobs. Countries need to put in place strong social, economic and environmental policies aimed at ensuring that development will be inclusive with effective income distribution, access to public services, particularly health and education, and targeted action to mitigate and reverse the structural drivers of inequality.

Those programmes need to be coupled with appropriate macroeconomic policies that can ensure the necessary physical space for increased social expenditures, as well as better income redistribution through a less regressive tax system and the policy of sustained increase in the real value of the minimum wage. Their design must be aimed at ensuring the broadest possible coverage with special attention to vulnerable groups, including women, groups discriminated against on the basis of race or ethnicity, the elderly and persons with disabilities.

This is a formula that Brazil has used to achieve unprecedented results in the area of poverty reduction, social inclusion and job creation in recent years. Since 2003, around 40 million people — one-fifth of the population — have been lifted out of poverty. Many of them have joined an upward moving and growing middle class. As is well known, a number of social programmes have been adopted to achieve those results. Chief among them are the conditional cash transfer schemes, such as the Bolsa Familia — a family stipend — or the Bolsa Verde — a green stipend.

But decent work and full employment have played a central role in ensuring the sustainability of our results in fighting poverty and inequality in our country. The Brazilian Government adopted a national plan for employment and decent work in 2007, as a result of the joint efforts of various federal agencies under the coordination of the Ministry of Labour and Employment and on the basis of a broad process of consultations among Government, worker and business representatives, in the same spirit of the International Labour Organization (ILO) tripartite system of representation. Its main objectives are to tackle structural drivers of poverty and inequality in the labour market through the reduction of unemployment, underemployment and informal jobs, as well as gender inequality and racial discrimination through the expansion of social protection coverage and an increase in productivity, safety and health conditions at work, especially in rural areas.

The programme is organized around three priority goals: to generate more jobs with equal opportunity and treatment, to eradicate slave labour and child labour, and to strengthen tripartite stakeholders and social dialogue as a tool of democratic governance. Between 2003 and 2011, 17.5 million formal jobs were generated in Brazil. As of 2011, there were 46 million workers under formal job contracts. That is an increase of 50 per cent in nine years. Over the same period, the unemployment rate in major urban areas of Brazil decreased from 11.6 per cent to 5.5 per cent, which is almost full employment.

The fact that Brazil will host the two most important global sporting events over the next couple of years provides us with an invaluable opportunity to promote the decent work agenda. Efforts are being undertaken in coordination with the ILO and other agencies of the United Nations system in order to raise awareness and to effectively foster the creation of quality jobs associated with those events on the basis of tripartite collaboration. We have launched jointly with the ILO an initiative entitled "Decent work before and after 2014: fair games, fair play".

The progress achieved in Brazil can also be attained in other regions. As studies carried out by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean demonstrate, the benefits of fighting inequality through active public policies is already visible not only in Brazil, but throughout the whole Latin American and Caribbean region.

Finally, we wish to underscore that the debates around the sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda provide us with a crucial opportunity to put together a set of goals and targets that can mobilize concrete action by decision-makers all over the world for achieving our common goal of eradicating poverty. Decent work and full employment are arguably the most effective drivers of a people-centred sustainable development agenda, along with strong social protection, backed by a State that prioritizes its role as a provider of welfare for all. The issue is critical for making progress in several of the goals we are currently working on for the post-2015 development agenda, in particular those on poverty eradication, reducing inequality, gender equality and the empowerment of women, economic growth, employment infrastructure and industrialization, among others. We must seize this opportunity to tap the full potential of decent work policies as a tool for achieving sustainable development.

Ms. Lu Mei (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China welcomes the convening by the President of the General Assembly of this high-level meeting on the them "Achieving poverty eradication through full employment and decent work for all in the post-2015 development agenda".

China aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The eradication of poverty is directly linked to the basic right to life and development of people in all countries, and is the priority concern of all States, especially developing countries, in their economic and social development. The post-2015 development agenda should continue to adopt poverty eradication and development as its core, espouse the principle of common but differentiated responsibility, respect the development model and the road to development freely chosen by States in light of their national conditions, and give full consideration to their different national situations, capacities and stages of development.

There has been some progress in international cooperation on poverty eradication since the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were formulated. The overall situation in poverty eradication does not inspire optimism. Nearly 1.3 billion extremely poor people still live on less than $1.25 per day — the international poverty line — and most of them reside in developing countries. As 2015 approaches, developing countries are still faced with many challenges in implementing the MDGs, and one of the most critical challenges is the issue of poverty eradication. This is the at the core of the ongoing implementation of the MDGs and the establishment of the post-2015 agenda. China calls upon the international community to make greater efforts in the following areas.

First, we must strengthen international cooperation for the eradication of poverty. The lack of development resources is one of the greatest challenges facing developing countries in the implementation of MDGs, especially in the area of poverty eradication. The primary task for the post-2015 agenda should be to resolve the most urgent issue of poverty eradication faced by developing countries, addressing not only the problem of extreme poverty, but also that of general poverty, and establishing both separate and cross-sectoral targets for the eradication of poverty. The international community needs to increase international cooperation for poverty eradication, effectively honour commitments in international cooperation for development, especially official development assistance, so as to provide sufficient financial and technical support and improve capacity-building for poverty eradication to effectively help developing countries in their efforts to eliminate poverty and backwardness.

Secondly, it is necessary to promote employment as an important driving force in poverty eradication. The creation of sustainable employment opportunities is an important means of eliminating poverty, promoting economic growth, fostering social integration and achieving social stability. States need to attach great importance to employment, make the promotion of employment a priority goal for economic and social development, and adopt development strategies and macroeconomic policies conducive to promoting employment. In this field, the international community needs to increase its support to developing countries and help them overcome difficulties, such as weaknesses in infrastructure and lack of expertise and funding, and create a better environment and more employment opportunities for them.

Thirdly, the international community should create an enabling external environment for developing countries to eliminate poverty. Under the negative effects of the financial crisis, the external development environment of developing countries still leaves no room for optimism. The international community needs to strengthen macroeconomic policy coordination, refine global economic governance and proceed from multiple dimensions, including financial, trade, investment and debt, to create an international development environment conducive to the eradication of poverty for States, particularly developing countries. Meanwhile, it needs to widely mobilize the forces of all parties, strengthen global partnership for development and work together to advance the global cause of poverty eradication.

China has made tireless efforts towards the realization of the MDGs and has achieved the MDG on halving our poor population ahead of schedule. But by international poverty standards, China still has a poor population of 100 million and still faces the difficult task of eliminating poverty, developing its economy and improving the living conditions of our people. China will do its utmost to implement our programme China's Outline for Development-oriented Poverty Reduction for Rural Areas (2011-2020) and further increase our efforts to reduce poverty and pursue development.

While trying to eradicate poverty at home, China is also working, within the framework of South-South cooperation, to provide assistance to other developing countries to the best of our ability and to share our experiences in poverty eradication with them for mutual development. China supports the placement of poverty

eradication at the centre of the post-2015 development agenda and is ready to work with others to promote the cause of poverty eradication in the world.

Mr. Rahman (Bangladesh): I would like to begin by aligning my statement with that delivered by the representative of Bolivia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

We thank the President for organizing this high-level event on an issue as important as full employment and decent work for all in the context of the post-2015 development agenda. Looking towards the post-2015 era, the world is facing the daunting challenge of creating around 600 million new jobs over the next 15 years in order to keep pace with the growth of the labour force. While poverty eradication must remain the first and overarching priority of the post-2015 development agenda, full employment and decent work through sustained economic growth and productive capacity-building are critical to the achievement of the sustainable development goals whose design we are currently grappling with and to the implementation of the forthcoming post-2015 development agenda as a whole.

The recognition that employment and decent work constitute one of the main strategies for enabling people to address poverty led to their inclusion in 2005 in the new Millennium Development Goal 1.B — "Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people". That target, however, fails to directly link to and address the issue of productive capacity. The post-2015 development agenda, including the sustainable development goals, should therefore address some of those gaps, not only through the integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in general, but also by clearly linking productive capacity, infrastructure development and economic growth to full employment and decent jobs.

It is essential that the post-2015 development agenda highlight the importance of job creation through an enabling environment, forward-looking macroeconomic policies, agricultural and industrial development, industrialization and the provision of adequate services, including social protection. Economic growth should be inclusive, pro-people and pro-planet and should generate employment. Strong support must be given to micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises, areas where large-scale job creation is possible. Innovative programmes such as employment guarantee schemes can provide poor workers with a minimum employment floor. Introducing a basic set of essential social transfers and services, as well as access to credit and financing, plus education for all, can help to achieve full employment and decent work for all.

In that context, I should mention the precarious situation of least-developed countries (LDCs), whose population is expected to nearly double by 2015 and will account for almost 40 per cent of world population growth during the next 40 years. A study by the International Labour Organization suggests that LDCs need an employment growth rate of 7 per cent in order to enable them to meet the MDGs, particularly MDG 1, as against the past decade's growth rate of 2.9 per cent per annum. This is an undoubtedly an alarming picture if one takes into account the poverty scenario and these countries' staggering capacity challenges.

In that context, it is imperative that international cooperation and global partnership join together to help this group of countries realize full employment and decent work in their respective milieus. Investments in skill-based training, vocational education, the promotion of business opportunities and duty-free, quota-free access to markets are key ingredients for generating employment in the LDCs. Flexible migration policies are also extremely important to achieving poverty eradication through full employment and decent work for an ever-growing workforce. Such linkages must be meaningfully incorporated into the post-2015 development agenda.

Mr. Masood Khan (Pakistan): Pakistan aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Bolivia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Poverty is not just about the absence of sufficient income. It is deprivation at various levels and in many areas. For the poor, it is endemic and pervasive. They face it every day. Lessons from the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals show that poverty is multifaceted. In many societies, it carries the stigma of being a minority, belonging to a lower caste, having a disability or just being a woman. It is most intense when one is denied access to justice or health services. It manifests itself in illiteracy and a lack of productive skills. It is experienced profoundly when one is not heard politically. It is about being unequal. Put simply, poverty is the sum of the deprivations faced by an individual, a family, a community or a nation.

Poverty exists amid plenty on a global scale. Oxfam established only recently that the 85 richest people in the world own the same total amount of wealth as 3.5 billion poor people across the globe. This is the same world where 1.2 billion people eke out a living on the paltry amount of $1.25 a day. More critically, the gap between rich and poor has continued to widen even as overall global per capita income is exhibiting an upward trend. Eradicating poverty is therefore our biggest challenge. In the post-2015 world, the test of our resolve lies in addressing the factors that perpetuate poverty. In that regard, a holistic approach is critical. Evidence and experience gathered from developing economies clearly demonstrate that higher growth, when accompanied by inclusive policies, has a decisive impact on poverty reduction.

Pakistan very strongly endorses the linkage between economic growth, employment generation and the promotion of decent work opportunities. If extreme poverty is not eliminated all around the world by a certain year, our target date, all other proposed sustainable development goals will remain unachieved. Poverty eradication demands that we target five core elements. The first is our global determination to reduce the proportion of people living in poverty, and more specifically, a multilateral resolve to eradicate extreme poverty. The second is addressing deprivation through a holistic agenda. The third is a global and national framework that provides opportunities and evolves modalities enabling countries to promote economic growth and development. The fourth is a strong emphasis on generating livelihoods and employment for inclusive, equitable and productive and decent work. The fifth is the construction of social floors and welfare frameworks that can prevent the poor from slipping back into further poverty.

Poverty, however, will not be eliminated by affirmations and exhortations alone, important as they are. What we need is a sound policy framework and adequate resources at the national and international levels. In that regard, the United Nations has a role as both a catalyst and a contributor.

Mr. Rishchynski (Canada) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by thanking the President for the opportunity of speaking at today's meeting.

(*spoke in English*)

I am very pleased to speak on the important theme of today's high-level meeting on poverty eradication through full employment and decent work for all in the post-2015 development agenda. To begin, we would like to stress, as Canada has stressed elsewhere, that sustainable economic growth is a primary driver of poverty reduction. In 2010, nearly 1.2 billion people in developing countries — about 21 per cent of the world's population — lived on less than $1.25 per day. That is a remarkable decline from 1.8 billion — or 42 per cent of the population — which was the case in 1990. The reduction coincides with higher growth rates over the same period for many countries, highlighting the importance of growth to poverty reduction.

Recognizing the remaining challenges of poverty eradication, growth, in our judgement, needs to feature prominently in the post-2015 development agenda and is something that was a missing link in the Millennium Development Goals. However, to be most effective, aggregate growth is not enough. Growth must be inclusive, focused on the poor, sustainable and job-rich. A target unemployment level is, in our view, an essential part of the focus on sustainable growth. More and better employment and higher earnings are the primary means by which poor women and men raise their standard of living and achieve greater resilience and self-reliance. We must see job creation, therefore, as a critical characteristic of sustainable economic growth and central to the post-2015 development goals.

(*spoke in French*)

We must also ensure that the jobs created involve decent work. The quality of jobs must be measured, first, by their impact on individual and social well-being, including factors such as remuneration, security, equality and the fundamental right to work. Secondly, they must be measured in terms of how they impact economic growth, competition, productivity and diversification.

In terms of equality and fairness, we must focus particular attention on women and young people in the context of the post-2015 development agenda. We understand that women and young people are affected disproportionately by high levels of unemployment. Possessing skills that are in high demand will enable today's women and young people to become the drivers of future growth and thus absolutely necessary in years to come.

(*spoke in English*)

With a focus on decent work, we must also eradicate abusive labour practices. Child labour, in particular,

has no place in the world we want in 2030. To that end, Canada would like to see a global commitment to ending all forms of child labour, including its worst forms, also reflected in the 2015 goals. Jobs and livelihoods need to be connected with private sector growth, as the two are closely linked.

What are the transformative changes needed for poverty eradication? Setting an enabling environment for private sector growth is key, as more productive, higher-paying employment is largely the result of growth in the private sector. As the World Bank's research has shown, nine of ten jobs in developing countries are created by the private sector. In that respect, in addition to a focus on decent work, we need to see change related to elements essential for sustainable economic growth that benefits the poor.

We see three tiers of targets necessary here. At the base, targets should be set that capture a conducive investment climate, including sound economic and fiscal management, the rule of law, open trade and free markets governed by prudent policy and sound regulations, and a competitive business-enabling environment and access to infrastructure. Basic social protection systems complement a focus on sustainable growth and poverty reduction, as they are a means of directly supporting the poorest and the most vulnerable. Social protection systems also act as stabilizers for the economy, bolster the resilience of the poor and help prevent people from falling into poverty in the first place.

(*spoke in French*)

Secondly, we believe that small island developing States should benefit from the dynamic growth of the private sector in terms of productivity, new product diversification, service industry and merchandising, as well as growth and viable enterprises. Services that are essential to the business sector — such as finance — should also be developed.

(*spoke in English*)

Thirdly, we must ensure that people have the knowledge and competencies to take on new opportunities. A target is therefore needed, in our judgement, on education and training, linked with labour market demand, particularly among women and youth. Canada also favours identifying targets on growth in employment that are cross-cutting with other goal areas. Women's economic empowerment and environmentally sustainable growth are both areas that we would like to see woven into the approach to growth and employment — on the first, through targets on women's access to productive assets, building women's employment, businesses and skills, and increasing their participation in economic decision-making; and on the second, through targets on cleaner and more efficient production.

(*spoke in French*)

There is no doubt that the list of priorities is long. The elements I have mentioned today are part of an even longer list of potential priorities in the framework of the post-2015 goals. In the upcoming months, one important aspect of our work will be to affirm the most important challenges in terms of employment, growth, eradication of poverty and to define the priorities.

Mr. Haniff (Malaysia): I wish to thank the President for convening this meeting of the General Assembly. Malaysia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Malaysia is encouraged that the proportion of people living in extreme poverty — that is, on less than $1.25 per day — has reached new lows in all six developing regions in the past five years. Despite that positive development, much work remains as progress has been uneven and 1.2 billion people are still living on less than $1.25 per day, most of them in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Malaysia is concerned that the ongoing global economic and financial crisis has led to an increase in worldwide unemployment — from 170 million unemployed persons in 2007 to an unprecedented high of 202 million in 2015.

Allow me now to share my country's own experience in addressing the issue of poverty eradication. Since the 1970s, Malaysia has successfully reduced poverty that affected nearly half of the population in 1970, through the implementation of various poverty eradication initiatives and programmes. Notably, Malaysia has achieved the target of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on poverty reduction well ahead of schedule, by reducing poverty to about 2.8 per cent of the population today.

The successful implementation of poverty eradication programmes in Malaysia can be attributed to its rapid economic development, which has been facilitated by the successful power-sharing and political stability that Malaysia has enjoyed over the past 57 years. It can also be attributed to the Government's

strategic planning and effective implementation of economic programmes that include pro-poor strategies, coupled with continuous investments in physical infrastructure, education, human capacity-building and primary health-care services.

Among the prominent poverty eradication initiatives is the rural development scheme implemented by the Federal Land Development Authority of Malaysia. The land reform programme has successfully lifted citizens involved in the land distribution scheme out of poverty. It is carried out through planned and coordinated land development and socioeconomic activities that, in turn, have created hundreds of thousands of decent jobs. The scheme has successfully elevated the quality of life and brought social and economic benefits to 177,000 rural families in Malaysia to date.

Moving forward, the Government is currently focusing on disadvantaged groups, especially natives of Sabah and Sarawak living in the interior, the Orang Asli indigenous people, and estate workers in peninsular Malaysia. There are still pockets of people living without electricity, without a water supply and with limited access to health facilities. There are schoolchildren who have to make arduous daily trips to school. The Government has given its assurance that it will address the issues of the less fortunate, free them from the poverty trap and ensure that the prosperity resulting from the country's development will be enjoyed by all Malaysians.

To that end, the Government will intensify the implementation of economic programmes and the provision of basic amenities. The Government is also considering granting land titles to the Orang Asli, the indigenous people, and the natives of Sabah and Sarawak. That will enable them to benefit from integrated agricultural development programmes through agropolitan and contract-farming approaches. Those groups will also be given better access to infrastructure and public facilities, such as education and skills training, thereby creating more quality employment opportunities that will enhance their employability.

One of the most successful poverty eradication programmes implemented by Malaysia is the 1Azam programme. The programme provides a balance between direct aid and economic opportunities for the poor to become more financially self-sustaining. The programme provides assistance in four essential areas: job placement, creating small business enterprises, small service providers, and opportunities in agriculture. Between January and August 2013 alone, 25,544 people took part in the programme. Out of that figure, 16,470 1Azam participants were women. That is in line with the Government's recognition of the important role women play in Malaysia's socioeconomic development.

To ensure the effectiveness of the poverty-eradication programme, the Government has established the eKasih system, a centralized Malaysian national poverty data bank that stores information related to poverty. It can be accessed and used by all Government agencies and other related parties for the purpose of planning, coordination and monitoring of poverty-eradication programmes in Malaysia. Notably, the eKasih innovation was awarded the first prize in the United Nations Public Service Awards for 2012 in recognition of its significant contribution to poverty eradication in Malaysia.

Malaysia will continue to share its development experience in the field of poverty eradication with fellow developing countries at the regional and global levels, with a view to accelerating the implementation of the MDGs. The sharing of our development experience has been implemented since the 1980s mainly through the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme, which is one element of the commitment of the Malaysian Government to the promotion of technical cooperation among developing countries under the South-South cooperation framework. Currently, more than 27,000 participants, mainly from the least developed countries and Africa, have benefited from Malaysia's sharing of experience and expertise. The programme will continue to further contribute in the upcoming post-2015 development agenda framework.

Let me conclude by emphasizing that poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon that extends beyond income poverty. For that reason, Malaysia is developing a multidimensional poverty index as a measure to address the non-income dimensions, such as education, health and living standards, in our efforts to eradicate poverty in a holistic manner.

Mr. Zehnder (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to thank the President for organizing this thematic debate.

Over the past two decades, progress in the fight against poverty has been more rapid than ever before. That is due to economic development, appropriate policies and global mobilization in support of the

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Despite the progress achieved, however, more than 1 billion people are still living in conditions of extreme poverty. It is therefore our common duty to continue to carry out actions to achieve the MDGs.

Economic growth is a major factor, but it is insufficient for the reduction of poverty. In recent decades, growth has lifted millions of people out of poverty. At the same time, we note worsening income disparity, one of the most worrisome risks noted in the *Global Risks 2014* report of the World Economic Forum. It is therefore crucial to ensure that economic growth is inclusive and reflected in rising standards of living for the entire population.

To that end, the economy must offer good jobs that allow women and men to work in decent conditions. The lack of suitable jobs and the lack of prospects are at the root of economic privation and generate a sense of frustration and social exclusion, especially among young people. Young people are particularly affected by the problems of unemployment, low salaries and job instability. In addition, social exclusion and economic deprivation can push certain individuals towards illicit acts that jeopardize the development of peaceful societies. Thus, the benefits of decent employment go well beyond the economic dimension. Such jobs contribute to people's autonomy and self-esteem, while favouring peace and social cohesion.

Different policies contribute to the promotion of decent work and poverty eradication. Those should serve us as guides in the formulation of the post-2015 development agenda.

First, the decent work agenda, which was developed by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and endorsed by the United Nations, contributes to the promotion of inclusive development. The implementation of international labour standards should be encouraged in order to ensure decent working conditions for all, including migrant workers. In that regard, we must pay particular attention to the principles and fundamental rights of work. Those rights notably include freedom of association, the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour, the effective abolition of child labour, and the elimination of discrimination in matters of employment and profession.

Secondly, more targeted initiatives must be implemented to introduce social protection mechanisms and to ensure their long-term economic and fiscal viability. In that regard, the Social Protection Floor Initiative, led by the ILO and the World Health Organization, and ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation No. 202 provide useful guidance in that regard. But we must ensure that social protection covers all groups of society, especially women, migrants and members of ethnic minorities, and we must facilitate the transfer of social benefits. Social protection is often linked to employment, and the gender perspective must be taken into account in the formulation and implementation of standards, guidelines and policies for the numerous women working in the informal private sector.

Thirdly, in view of a potential goal on education, we must underscore the direct link between employment and inclusive and quality educational systems that develop skills responding to the needs of the labour market. This issue concerns all economies, whatever their level of development, because of the increase in specialized jobs and the importance of innovation to stimulate sustainable growth.

Mr. Maope (Lesotho): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

At the outset, the African Group would like to underscore that full employment and decent work are essential elements in achieving the eradication of poverty, the reduction of inequality, and respect for human dignity. Employment objectives need to become central to global actions and mechanisms. Therefore, a development agenda that gives priority to the creation of productive employment, especially for young people, is of the utmost importance for the African Group. The capacity behind employment generation is fundamentally linked to reviving and enhancing productive policies through adequate finance, investment, technology and trade policies.

According to the African Union Commission and the Economic Commission for Africa,

> "More than 70 per cent of Africans earn their living from vulnerable employment, as African economies continue to depend heavily on the production and export of primary commodities. Investment continues to be concentrated in capital-intensive extractive industries, with limited forward and backward linkages with the rest of the economy." (*E/2013/17, para. 48*)

Wider diversification from primary commodity production is therefore needed, as is intensified value addition in commodity sectors.

In the same vein, the African Group would like to refer to the document entitled *The MDG Report 2013: Assessing Progress in Africa Toward the Millennium Development Goals*, which was co-authored by the African Union Commission, the Economic Commission for Africa, the African Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme. According to that report, it is critical to reduce inequalities in Africa, and one of the causes of those inequalities is the current structure of African economies. The reports states that:

> "Inequalities result in part from the enclave structure of most African economies, which concentrates economic activity in the extractive and commodity-producing sectors. With limited spillover to other sectors, such production patterns generate few jobs, concentrate wealth in resource-rich sectors, encourage inequality and sow the seeds of social unrest."

To achieve the transformation of African economies, the report recommends the promotion of industrialization and structural transformation through, inter alia, economic diversification and value chains linking raw material producers to end users. For those reasons, the Group is of the view that job creation requires sustained economic growth and a structural transformation of African economies through industrialization that focuses on value addition and economic diversification. In that regard, it is essential to achieve sustained and job-rich industrial development in Africa by increasing manufacturing value added at a higher rate than population growth and by increasing the share of manufacturing value added in gross domestic product.

Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia are reported to have the highest ratio of people living in extreme poverty, far below the $2-a-day threshold, despite the marked decline in extreme poverty in developing regions. The reduction of the number of the poor in sub-Saharan Africa has proved difficult for almost a decade, with the share of workers in vulnerable employment near 80 per cent. Vulnerable employment presents a particular challenge to poverty reduction because workers in those categories lack the resilience to economic shocks and other socioeconomic challenges. For example, rising food prices force poor households to reduce spending on nutritious food and reduce their access to essential social services, such as health care. The net result is the loss of gains made on the health-related Millennium Development Goals.

We are deeply concerned that the deceleration of employment growth has further extended to young people. Global youth unemployment is said to be three times as high as the corresponding adult rate. Youth constitute 40 per cent of the 200 million jobless people worldwide. This is a major constraint in our collective efforts to eradicate poverty and to build a peaceful world. In that connection, education and training policies should be aimed at supporting economic development and at preparing citizens for productive employment based on the requirements of new labour markets.

I also wish to speak to the aspect of poverty that requires special attention in Africa. That is a reference to rural poverty. The disparities in development between rural and urban areas prevent most populations in developing countries from contributing significantly to their national economies. The issues of unemployment and underemployment are prevalent in rural areas. In this context, I wish to emphasize the critical importance of investing in rural development as a viable strategy for fighting poverty.

In conclusion, I wish to underscore the importance of education as a tool for poverty eradication. One of Africa's most import assets is its human resources. To make gainful use of that resource, we need to invest in skills, academic and technical development. We should therefore pursue education that goes beyond primary school and even secondary school to encompass vocational and tertiary education. It is of critical importance to broaden the scope of education in order to meet the demands of industrialization. Similarly, capacity-building and technology transfer are essential tools in the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda.

Mrs. Nazaire (Haiti) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, my delegation would like to thank President Ashe for convening this high-level meeting on a subject of the highest importance, which should be useful in elaborating the post-2015 development agenda.

My delegation also associates itself with the statements made by the representatives of Bolivia and Benin on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the least developed countries, respectively.

The eradication of poverty has been rightly established as a central element of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and, judging by the ongoing work of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, it should continue to occupy that pivotal place, which is explicitly coupled to the objectives of full employment and decent work. Guided as much by economic imperatives as by a moral obligation that places humankind at the centre of our concerns, unprecedented awareness and international coordination have achieved the goal of halving extreme poverty five years before the deadline. However, we must not rest on our laurels, because the task of the total eradication of poverty, the sine qua non of sustainable development, remains huge. Moreover, the recent global financial crisis and its significant negative impact on employment has demonstrated the fragility and potentially reversible nature of the progress achieved to date.

For three years now, the Haitian Government has implemented and accelerated a whole series of measures and social protection programmes targeting the most vulnerable populations and aimed at combatting the scourges of extreme poverty, in particular the fight against hunger and the lack of decent incomes in rural and urban areas. The results are very encouraging, but are only the first step in a long-term process. We are determined to tackle the transformative change that can guarantee a strengthening of the triptych of poverty eradication, full employment and decent work.

In that context, my delegation would like to raise three points for our general consideration that seem relevant and interconnected.

First, poverty eradication and full employment cannot be achieved without a strong private sector driven by substantial long-term investments. For the first time ever, Haiti, the only least developed country in the Americas, now has many leaders who come directly from the business community. All their efforts are focused on ending Haiti's decades-long model of international economic dependency by working to strengthen State capacity and establish a legal and macroeconomic framework attractive to entrepreneurs and investors. In that regard, we have called on our partners in the international community to take that new fact into account by, for example, simplifying the procedures for access to project funding by bilateral and multilateral donors, and by building the Haitian private sector's capacity for absorption and for developing viable projects.

Secondly, by taking the multidimensional aspects of poverty into consideration, we should be able to place the emphasis on sound public policy, prioritizing fundamental areas with high added value that can maximize opportunities for equal employment and decent work. Not surprisingly, health and, above all, education, are at the top of the priority list for the Haitian Government, with its programme of compulsory and free universal education.

Thirdly and lastly, the major obstacles to poverty reduction that experts have identified, which include income inequality and environmental insecurities, demand responsibility, creativity and vision. They assume a State strong enough to fulfil its regulatory tasks of strategizing, regulating and, where necessary, redistributing. Regardless of the legitimate debate on the specifics of the solutions that have been proposed, this is one of the main lessons underpinning the economist Thomas Picketty's book on the structural inequality of wealth in market economies, which is currently being discussed in every academic circle and in the major centres of economic and financial decision-making.

Mr. Och (Mongolia): I would like to concur with previous speakers on the importance of this very timely and crucial high-level meeting.

My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Bolivia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

As we approach the overall target date for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2015, our common aim is to accelerate our joint efforts to complete the unfinished business of the MDGs. Advancing and completing the most off-track MDG is the starting point of the post-2015 development agenda, but as we all agree, the latter must be more comprehensive, balanced, ambitious and transparent in addressing that challenge. The eradication of poverty remains the overarching objective of the international community, and it should be central to any proposal on sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda.

Achieving poverty eradication through full employment and decent work for all is a central element of national development strategies and international policies. As a result of the world economic and financial

crisis of 2008 and 2009, the rate of poverty reduction has been slow. The world economy is likely to create only half of the 80 million jobs that will be needed over the next two years if we are to reach pre-crisis employment rates. In this situation, decent work is a global priority. Between 2015 and 2030, we will have to create about 670 million jobs — and today, 75 million young people are currently unemployed. We must focus not only on the quantity but on the quality of jobs; what people need is decent work.

Reducing poverty and unemployment has been the most pressing development challenge in Mongolia for the past 20 years. The Government has taken measures to articulate and implement a strategy aimed at reducing poverty and promoting inclusive economic growth. According to our fifth national report on the MDGs, our poverty head-count has declined by more than 11 percentage points, from 38.7 per cent in 2010 to 27.4 per cent in 2012. The sharp poverty decline of recent years is attributed mainly to effective Government policies on social welfare, the labour market, food supplies and improvements in maternal and child health. The poverty rate is nonetheless unacceptably high for a country undergoing rapid economic growth. We urgently need to focus on building resiliency and social protection in order to reduce poor and marginal populations' vulnerability. Past experience has shown that while non-targeted welfare measures, such as cash handouts, have some short-term benefits, they do not result in sustained poverty reduction.

Our unemployment rate, which stood at 11.6 per cent in 2009, fell to 9.9 per cent in 2010 and 7.7 per cent in 2011. In 2012, we amended our law on employment support, enabling us to implement a number of job-creation ventures through various programmes. A programme for employing Mongolian citizens with income is under way and has created jobs for 150,000 people. It is vital that Mongolia diversify its economy and create alternative employment sources, especially for young people. In that regard, the Government has introduced special programmes such as one for pre-employability for young people and a sub-programme on support for youth and student employment, aimed at reducing unemployment among young people. One of Mongolia's key challenges is creating a skilled workforce in order to improve its competitiveness internationally.

The MDGs have been contributing to development at the national and international level since 2001, but we must do more. In that regard, achieving poverty eradication through full employment and decent work for all should be included as a top priority in the post-2015 development agenda.

Mr. Grunditz (Sweden): The Nordic countries Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and my own country, Sweden, appreciate this opportunity for a dialogue on how employment and decent work for all can contribute to poverty eradication. The Nordic countries are deeply committed to contributing to poverty eradication and decent work for all, and, of course, we are also deeply committed to contributing to the post-2015 process.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), we recall, were concretely formulated and limited in number. That made them a successful tool for raising awareness and cooperation. However, despite the success of the MDGs, extreme poverty, inequalities and other impediments to sustainable development still exist. In our efforts to develop a new universal agenda for sustainable and inclusive development, we must consider the lessons learned from the MDGs. Clearly, one important lesson is that poverty eradication must be at the heart of the agenda — in this case, at the heart of the sustainable development agenda. If we focus on inequalities and on leaving no one behind, we can achieve our goals.

A job, with an income, is the primary route out of poverty. In every society and at all times, however, there are also people who need social protection: children, persons with disabilities and the elderly. Job creation requires economic policies that are deliberately aimed at promoting employment-intensive investments and the employability of all women and men. Creating decent jobs is a pressing global development priority and should be at the heart of the new development goals for the post-2015 period.

Governments have an important role in promoting employment and skills-enhancing business environments. To ensure decent work, Governments have a responsibility to promote occupational safety and health, and to set minimum wages. It is also important to create a level playing field for all enterprises. This is indeed a huge challenge for every Government to address.

The rule of law and democratic, effective and accountable Government institutions are also fundamental building blocks for sustainable and inclusive economic development and for a predictable

business environment. A crucial constraint for the growth of the private sector in many low-income countries and for trade is access to reliable electricity and transport infrastructure. Access to reliable electricity and improved transport infrastructure will facilitate economic integration and trade. This will create economic growth and create jobs. Improved infrastructure is also a strong driver for inclusive growth and job creation for women and men living in poverty. Infrastructure investments must, however, be accompanied by investments in social sectors and social protection. The productivity of the work force depends on non-discriminatory access to and quality of the education system, including technical and vocational training, and the primary health care system.

Gender equality and women's economic empowerment are areas where progress is needed and overdue. The fact that women in some places are still denied the right to work and to own property does not make any sense — not least in terms of economic policy. No country can afford to deny women their rights to participate in economic life. Women's economic empowerment may be the single most important contributing factor to the eradication of poverty. We must reduce the burden of women's unpaid work and guarantee equal pay for equal work.

In conclusion, we have the knowledge and the resources to create decent work and social protection floors for all women and men, reduce inequalities and eradicate extreme poverty. The post-2015 development agenda will show our political will to do so.

Mr. Hahn Choonghee (Republic of Korea): Since poverty is multidimensional, progress towards its eradication is linked to other focus areas. These include economic growth, education, health, gender equality and governance. Among them, employment, today's theme, has long been recognized as a key enabler in the fight against poverty. As more than 200 million people worldwide remain unemployed and young people are affected most by prolonged economic hardship, we need to tackle this issue as a matter of urgency.

However, despite conventional wisdom, growth does not necessarily guarantee more and better jobs. The majority of poor people in the developing countries already have jobs, most of which are insecure and paid inadequately. As such, in order for employment to substantively contribute to poverty eradication, we need to encourage economic growth that not only increases job opportunities but also enhances the quality of jobs. In this connection, we believe that good education, as well as education for all, is critical and imperative, considering Korea's poverty eradication experience.

Related to this, we would like to draw attention to the decent work agenda of the International Labour Organization, which advocates, first, the promotion of full and productive employment; secondly, social protection; thirdly, respect for fundamental principles and rights at work; and, fourthly, social dialogue. We believe that the agenda duly focuses on social and environmental factors as well, as on economic aspects of employment, and that its balanced and integrated approach can be a useful guideline in the journey to achieving sustainable poverty eradication.

Creating decent work requires multifaceted efforts and cooperation at the national and the international levels alike. At the national level, especially in developing countries, priority should be given to increasing the productivity of the agricultural sector, which makes up a large portion of their industries. Such an emphasis will not only result in significant employment opportunities, but can also simultaneously help to address inequalities such as the gaps between the rural and urban areas. The experience of Korea's famous Saemaul Undong national rural anti-poverty campaign of the 1970s and 1980s clearly demonstrates the benefits of such a strategy. "Saemaul Undong" literally means "new village/community movement" and could serve as a reference for poverty eradication and rural development in developing countries.

In addition, increased focus needs to be placed on the creative economy with a view to quality job creation. By harnessing each country's unique cultural assets combined with creative ideas, states can benefit from the creation of high-quality and high-value-adding employment opportunities.

At the international level, a favourable international environment for quality job creation will be crucial. This can be achieved by facilitating greater private investment and establishing open and fair trade and financial systems, with special attention given to the least developed countries. Complementing traditional North-South cooperation, South-South and triangular cooperation channels should also be actively pursued.

In all of our collective efforts, however, we must ensure that poverty eradication through job creation initiatives does not place any strains on environmental

sustainability through increased resource consumption. As such, efforts for job creation should be accompanied by transformative measures for a greener economy. In this context, we believe that advanced modern technology, such as smart agricultural technology, could serve as a good vehicle for job promotion and increased income, as well as for a sustainable environment through a virtuous cycle. The negative consequences of poverty on human lives are prevalent and persistent. That is why we should reaffirm our determination to free humankind from all forms of poverty.

In conclusion, to realize that goal, the Republic of Korea reiterates its commitment to actively participating in international efforts towards poverty eradication, in particular by continuing to increase official development assistance and by sharing our experience in poverty eradication. We further commit ourselves to constructively engaging in the upcoming discussion on the post-2015 development agenda.

Mr. Karaçay (Turkey): At the outset, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for organizing this important and timely discussion. Turkey remains committed to efforts aimed at eradicating poverty at all levels and to helping create a sustainable future for all, based on an approach encompassing economic, social and environmental aspects.

It is widely acknowledged that global economic progress has brought about widespread improvements in living standards for many in general. Nevertheless, inequalities, the inequitable sharing of goods, unemployment, lack of social protection, insufficiency or non-existence of human development services, lack of access to financial services and low quality of well-being are still commonly shared concerns. Long-term poverty eradication requires sustainable, inclusive economic growth. Economic growth is necessary but not sufficient to reduce poverty and inequality and to improve living standards.

In order to transform itself into prosperity and to eradicate poverty and inequality, growth needs to be inclusive, comprehensive and sustainable and should have a lasting and positive impact on poor people. Creating more productive and decent jobs is key to increasing the future prosperity of all and to eradicating poverty. Sustained growth needs to be inclusive and comprehensive. All countries should create the appropriate enabling conditions for that purpose. Sound macroeconomic policies that take investment financing needs into account and strengthen financial integration provide favourable conditions for investment, trade, exports and the mobilization of capital for investment, all of which are important drivers for growth.

Sustainable economic growth and trade are the key drivers of national and international prosperity and can contribute to global security. That requires an inclusive and open multilateral trade system that allows all countries to engage in global markets. The promotion of full employment, productive jobs and decent work, with an emphasis on young people, women, the eradication of inequality, access to financial services, adequate social protection and the appropriate training are essential to achieving poverty eradication. Open, accountable and effective institutions that reduce the cost and risk of investement, reward entrepreneurship and innovation and create vibrant and competitive markets provide opportunities for full employment and quality jobs.

In conclusion, increased investment in a range of sectors, such as clean energy, industrial production, education, manufacturing, services, agriculture, transport and infrastructure, provides the foundation for sustainable and inclusive growth. That will build the basis for us to provide numerous possibilites for full employment and decent work in the post-2105 development agenda.

Mr. Percaya (Indonesia): I wish to thank the President for the opportunity to share our views on the issue of employment and decent work in the post-2015 development agenda. I also wish to align my statement with that delivered by the Permanent Representative of Bolivia earlier this morning on behalf of Group of 77 and China.

Indonesia attaches the utmost importance to poverty eradication not only as the ultimate goal of development but also, most notably, as a reflection of our country's constitutional mandate, which upholds the basic objective of improving public welfare and social justice for all its people. It is widely recognized that poverty is a multidimensional challenge and is the cause, as well as a consequence, of the social dilemmas that poor people face.

The creation of sustained employment opportunities is the key to reducing inequality and eradicating poverty, while promoting economic growth. Earning an income through employment ultimately increases consumption and growth. Employment also addresses the social dimensions by facilitating access to education and

health care. For that purpose, we believe that our future development agenda should set the goal of employment and decent work. To be specific, the goal may include elements at the national level, such as implementing development strategies conducive to job creation, giving top priority to the promotion of full and productive employment for women and young people, increasing support for the private sector, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises, strengthening public employment and human resources services, improving the integrated mechanism for employment and social welfare, promoting decent work and establishing a harmonious environment for employees.

At the international level, the goal may include the following elements: mainstreaming job creation into the global macroeconomic policy, increasing input to developing countries in terms of financial assistance, scientific research, technological cooperation and vocational training, and improving the productivity of developing countries and the development of their labour-intensive industries.

While promoting employment as a goal for our future development agenda, we also need to underscore the link between the goal of employment and other areas that concern livelihoods. The link to which I refer is a social protection agenda, which can safeguard people's well-being and improve their standard of living. The employment goal or agenda must be strengthened by a social protection agenda.

In that connection, we are very pleased that employment and social protection floors are incorporated as paired elements in line with the outcomes of major conferences on development. The outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (resolution 66/288, annex), as well as our deliberations in the discussions of the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals, underscore that issue. An adequate social protection system helps to reinforce equitable growth. Social protection can distribute growth and serve as a tool to bring about social cohesion and ensure equity.

Finally, I wish to emphasize that the future development agenda needs to reflect a goal that can promote growth through a global effort. The creation of full employment and decent work for all, as well as social protection floors, should be the goal. We should achieve that not only at the national but also at the international level.

Mr. Mahmoud (Egypt): I would like to associate my comments with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Bolivia earlier this morning on behalf of Group of 77 and China.

Poverty eradication is the global challenge facing the world today and is an indispensable requirement for sustainable development in developing countries, as we affirmed in the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled "The future we want" (resolution 66/288, annex). The importance of sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth to achieve poverty eradication and the Millennium Development Goals cannot be overemphasized.

The progress made during the first decade of the current century was extremely uneven and slow and efforts failed to reach millions of people, including women and children, in particular in the least developed countries and Africa, where there is currently the highest number of poor people. Furthermore, such failures severely threaten middle-income countries and the global economic situation with a reversal of economic growth and an increase in the level of poverty in those countries.

The prospects for achieving the agreed poverty reduction targets and the other development goals by 2015 seem extremely bleak. The constraints facing the fight against poverty arising from the current financial and economic global crisis, the continuing food insecurity and the challenges caused by climate change are a major source of concern for developing countries, as well. Poverty manifests itself in different forms and involves issues of economic, social, environmental and institutional dimensions. In that context, much needs to be done in order to reverse the declining international resource flows caused by inadequate financial assistance for development, the worsening terms of international trade, widespread unemployment, the job crisis and other factors. A number of measures can contribute to the promotion of economic growth and the eradication of poverty.

The first such measure is the promotion of productive capacities and the strengthening of agricultural development. Secondly, debt restructuring should be one of the various financial assistance instruments. The third measure is international trade expansion. Developed countries should be urged to remove trade barriers and agricultural subsidies, which constitute

serious impediments to market access by developing countries. The fourth measure is market access in developed countries for the agriculture, manufactured goods and services of developing countries, which would help them create productive jobs. The fifth measure is the facilitation of the transfer of technology by developed countries to the developing world. The sixth measure is the reinforcement of employment and decent work, as those are crucial means to improving living standards.

The recession and increased competition have even lowered earnings for workers employed in the informal sector. Consequently, progress in reducing working poverty has slowed. In 2011, there were an estimated 456 million workers living on less than $1.25 dollars a day. If poverty had continued declining at pre-crisis rates, the number of working poor would have been lowered by 50 million.

Young people are disporportionately affected by unemployment and overrepresented in the informal sector and among the working poor. In 2011, 12.6 per cent of young people aged 15 to 24 were unemployed, as compared with 4.6 per cent of adults. The number of discouraged young workers, who are not counted among the unemployed because they are not actively seeking employment, has increased sharply in many countries as well. Early labour market experience is a key driver of personal and social empowerment. A difficult transition from school to work has a negative impact on long-term earning prospects and increases the risk of unemployment later in life. Therefore, exclusion from productive activity will have negative consequences on the well-being of the current and future generations of young people. We support the Global Jobs Pact, which provides a useful framework for countries to formulate an appropriate policy package specific to their national situation and priorities, and call for continued coordination and coherence in the implementation of the Global Jobs Pact to avert the job crisis.

Enhancing human resources capacity for higher, more creative and productive employment and decent work for all is vital for poverty reduction. In that regard, we would like to emphasize the role of the public sector in the promotion of human resource development and the role of the United Nations system and the contribution from the private sector and civil society in supporting the actions and priorities of national Governments.

We continue to believe that poverty is the most pervasive violation of human and development rights. An effective and meaningful global campaign against the scourge of poverty requires poverty eradication to be placed at the core of national strategies and international cooperation. National Governments carry a critical pivotal role to play in that regard and do, indeed, have the ultimate responsibility to ensure the success of the campaign against poverty. We have a firm belief that a successful pursuit of national policies needs to be supported by a conducive international enabling environment and continued support from the international community. In fact, the whole international community needs to engage more in genuine internaitonal cooperation and implement concerted policies in a mutually supportive manner in order to ensure the achievement of concrete progress towards the realization of the established international rules and targets.

Mr. Donoghue (Ireland): I thank you, Sir, for the opportunity to address this high-level meeting. At the outset, let me say that Ireland aligns itself with statement made by the observer of the European Union.

We have heard already this morning a range of statistics, but the fact remains that, with over 208 million people without work worldwide, including 75 million young people, and a further 800 million working people living below the $2-per-day poverty line, securing full and productive employment and decent work for all is an urgent personal and universal challenge for a billion people and, by extension, for us all. The fact that 8 per cent of the world's population enjoy almost 50 per cent of global income implies that the remaining 92 per cent of us are struggling for the remaining 50 per cent. That, in turn, means that the employment and decent work challenge is not just about more and better jobs, but also about addressing income inequality.

With an estimated 2.3 million people dying from work-related accidents each year, the employment and decent work challenge is also about including safety standards in the workplace and ensuring accountability for violations of workers' rights. With workers and trade unions across the world often suffering intimidation, repression and violence, the employment and decent work challenge is also about protecting civil society's place and human rights defenders.

As the outcome document (resolution 68/6) of the Secretary-General's high-level event last September

stated, the post-2015 agenda should reinforce the international community's commitment to poverty eradication and sustainable development. In doing so, it should build on the foundations laid by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), complete their unfinished business and respond to new challenges.

In designing the post-2015 framework, we must learn from the MDGs and ensure that we address the multidimensional nature of poverty and recognize the interrelationship between different themes and goals. That means that achieving poverty eradication will require progress not just on income poverty, but across a number of areas, including food and nutrition security, gender equality and women's empowerment, peaceful societies, the rule of law and capable institutions.

When considering how best to promote poverty eradication through full and productive employment and decent work for all, we must take a broad approach and address the many issues, which will create an environment for full and productive employment and decent jobs. Please allow me to put forward five short points in that regard.

First, we must promote greater access to social protection, particularly for vulnerable groups. Adequate social protection can reduce the risk of people falling into poverty during periods without work, help people who are unable to participate in the labour force to live their lives with dignity, and provide their dependents with the opportunity to attend school or join the work force. That is an important foundation upon which to achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all.

Seondly, given that access to more and better jobs requires improvements in basic education outcomes, the post-2015 agenda must make a strong commitment to ensuring equal access for all to quality primary and secondary education with a particular focus on girls. In addition, we need to look closely at the relationship between human capital and the skills required by the economy. In that regard, we must support greater access to vocational training, as well as technological, engineering and scientific skills.

Thirdly, to address the gender gaps in global employment, the post-2015 framework must seek to ensure equal access to employment opportunities for women and equal pay for equal work. In addition, it must address all the barriers to women's involvement in the labour force, including by ensuring equal access to markets, justice systems and financial services, ensuring equal rights to all who inherit land, property and other productive resources and assets, and by ensuring women's sexual, reproductive, health and rights.

Fourthly, we know that growth in agriculture is on average twice as effective in reducing povery as growth in other areas. For that reason, the post-2015 agenda must include targets that strengthen the ability of smallholder farmers to sustainably increase their productivity and improve their livelihoods. The post-2015 agenda must also support developing countries in their efforts to promote economic diversification and achieve greater added value on domestic raw materials. In addition, it must highlight the potential employment and growth opportunities associated with a shift towards sustainable development, as economies place greater emphasis on resource sufficiency, on sustainable production and consumption and on decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation.

Finally, we can all identify situations which prove that without peace and improvements in governance at all levels, we will simply be unable to fulfil any of our ambitions to eradicate poverty and achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all. By strengthening the effectiveness and accountability of Government institutions, protecting the freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, prioritizing stable macroeconomic policies underpining an open rules-based multilateral trading system and impartially enforcing the rule of law, the post-2015 agenda can further create an environment for improved investment, greater economic output, more social cohesion and a more equal society.

Those are just some of the matters, which, if included in the post-2015 development agenda, I believe could support all of us in achieving poverty eradication, full and productive employment and decent work for all. I would go further and say that, without them, we are in danger of failing in our first priority.

Mr. Abdrakhmanov (Kazakhstan): Taking into account the late hour and the very limited time, let me reiterate that we are ready to align ourselves with all the previous and excellent observations and commitments. I would like to say, however, that yesterday, the President of Kazakhstan, Mr. Nursultan Nazarbayev, drew the attention of participants to the Astana Economic Forum and second World Anti-Crisis Conference on this

very issue of the reduction of inequality and poverty eradication. It is very important that representatives of the United Nations, in particular Under-Secretary-General Acharya, the President of the Economic and Social Council, Ambassador Sajdik, and some other colleagues participated in the forum and that they will, I believe, be ready to share their impressions of that global meeting on their return.

I would also like to draw attention to the remarks made by my President that, despite being in the depths of poverty, millions of people show great dynamism and vitality. My President therefore strongly urges the international community to depoliticize economic relations, not to create artificial contrasts between countries and regions, and to avoid the rhetoric of conflict. As a result, he recommends strengthening our collective capacity to assess the world's potential for economic growth and the threats.

As an outcome of the Astana Economic Forum and second World Anti-Crisis Conference, the participants adopted the concept of a world anti-crisis plan. That concept has been put forward for the attention of and consideration by States Members of the United Nations with a view to their taking some robust steps to that end. My country is ready, together with the United Nations, the World Bank and other international organizations, to create a platform that is conducive to the drawing up of the complex road map on poverty eradication.

We understand that each Member States is responsible for its own progress. For that reason, my country has launched a strategy for a much longer term than the post-2015 development agenda, called Kazakhstan 2050, which is a vision of our country's long-term plan for its development. We are ready to share our success story, best practices and experience with other countries in order to achieve our noble goal of eradicating poverty.

Ms. Moleko (South Africa): At the outset, my delegation wishes to thank the President for having convened this high-level meeting. My delegation aligns itself with the statements made by the Permanent Representatives of Bolivia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and of Lesotho on behalf of the African Group, respectively.

Three years remain before the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty comes to an end in 2017. We also have only one year until the target date for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, which have already helped to spur unprecedented progress in reducing poverty. However, much more needs to be done, since many of our countries still face the challenges of eradicating the scourge of poverty, along with inequality and unemployment. Those in poor communities, who mainly live in rural areas and depend largely on agriculture for their livelihood, are the most affected by those three challenges. Agriculture constitutes a significant part of the economies of African countries and remains a key sector for poverty eradication and employment creation. It continues to absorb a large portion of the working population in many developing countries, particularly in Africa.

My delegation firmly believes that the African continent has the potential to feed itself, to eliminate poverty and to contribute significantly to the global food market. It is therefore imperative that global plans take into account the specific conditions and challenges in the areas where agriculture remains the main economic activity. Some regions have further to go than others in that regard and poverty eradication programmes must be scaled up to reach the poorest and most marginalized groups, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa.

The African continent has designated 2014 as the Year of Agriculture in Africa in order to speed up its drive for food security. That cannot be achieved without the support of the international community on initiatives such as the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme and the fulfilment of the commitments made at the L'Aquila summit.

South Africa also faces the triple challenge of poverty, inequality and unemployment. Given the persistence of those challenges, in that connection we have drawn up a national development plan, which is my country's socioeconomic blueprint for what the country should do to eradicate poverty, increase employment and reduce inequality by 2030. In that context, we attach great importance to the theme of this high-level meeting.

As we prepare for the intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda, we need to consider ambitious strategies that can contribute to a sustainable impact on the structural problems of pervasive poverty, inequality and unemployment. The eradication of poverty should remain the overarching priority that informs the vision of the post-2015 development agenda. By ensuring an adequate means of implementation and by addressing challenges such as inequality, that objective can become a reality. It is

imperative that the policies and development efforts targeted at poverty eradication address not only the challenges but also the opportunities associated with sustainable development at both the international and the national levels.

Employment is a leading contributor to and the outcome of growth and development. Employment objectives should therefore be central to global actions and mechanisms. They require international cooperation that assists developing countries through actions at the level of international economic, financial, trade, technology and social systems in order to support and facilitate the efforts of developing countries. Developed countries should refrain from actions that create barriers to the efforts and progress of such countries.

In conclusion, in embracing the challenge of eradicating poverty, my delegation is keenly aware of the need to significantly accelerate the global efforts to implement, in a decisive and bold manner, the commitment made by our leaders in the historic United Nations Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2) to sparing no effort in the fight against poverty. A strengthened global partnership for development in the context of a post-2015 development agenda remains the key to success in that regard.

Mrs. Carrion (Uruguay) (spoke in Spanish): At the outset, my delegation associates itself with the statement made earlier this morning by the representative of the Plurinational State of Bolovia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The concept of extreme poverty set out in the Millennium Development Goals does not reflect the complexity and increasing inequality of today's world. For that reason, we understand that poverty eradication must remain a goal in itself and not be only a vision in the new international agenda.

Similarly, it should be taken into account that poverty is multidimensional and is not expressed in national income per capita. That is why we are fighting for the elaboration and implementation of an efficient and inclusive post-2015 development agenda that focuses on sustainable development goals aimed at eradicating poverty and promoting gender equality and the rights of women, youth and children, particularly those who live in situations of poverty, exclusion and marginalization.

Despite the improvement in living standards in recent decades, most workers in developing countries continue to have informal and precarious jobs, with low incomes, uncertain prospects and limited protection against social, economic and environmental risks. Job opportunities for full time work with regular salaries are limited, especially for women, who are underrepresented in the formal economic sector in most regions. Decent work is essential for the well-being of persons. In addition to generating income, it facilitates social and economic progress and strengthens the dignity of persons, their families and their communities.

Throughout the world, young people of both sexes are making an important contribution as productive workers, entrepreneurs, consumers, citizens, members of civil society and agents of change. Although young people are genuine national capital, in many cases they are extremely vulnerable and have to face a high degree of economic and social uncertainty. Often, we do not avail ourselves of their full potential because they have no access to productive decent work.

The lack of decent work for present day youth reflects and perpetuates the vicious circle of poverty; lack of access to education and adequate training and precarious jobs lead to the transmission of poverty from one generation to the next. Promoting worker protections includes decent working conditions, good salaries, adequate workday and sanitary conditions and security in work. The situation of migrant workers also requires attention. It is important for Governments to make efforts to integrate migrant workers completely into society, facilitate family reunions in accordance with the specific laws and norms of each country and promote an environment of harmony, tolerance and respect.

To conclude, it is Uruguay's understanding that economic growth should go hand in hand with social inclusion, working towards poverty eradication through social protection policies, programmes and systems that bring about an inclusive society with sustainable development.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.

United Nations A/68/PV.89

General Assembly
Sixty-eighth session

Official Records

89th plenary meeting
Friday, 23 May 2014, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ashe ..... (Antigua and Barbuda)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala), took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 23 (*continued*)

Eradication of poverty and other development issues

(a) Implementation of the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008-2017)

Meeting on achieving poverty eradication through full employment and decent work for all in the post-2015 development agenda

Mr. Faye (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I thank the President of the General Assembly for this opportunity to participate in this high-level meeting on achieving poverty eradication through full employment and decent work for all in the post-2015 development agenda.

Senegal associates itself with the statements made by the representatives of Bolivia and Lesotho on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the Group of African States, respectively (see A/68/PV.88), and would like to make a statement in its national capacity.

The Millennium Development Goals are undoubtedly one of the most ambitious initiatives for eradicating poverty and thereby improving the living conditions of populations. Despite the significant progress made, it has unfortunately become clear that the expectations and ambitions for 2015 will not be met. That has become even more apparent as recent relevant reports have highlighted warning signs that give rise to pessimism, owing to the persistence of poverty in most developing countries, inter alia, in terms of the extent of inequality, food insecurity and challenges related to access to decent employment.

Tackling underemployment, especially among young people, requires bold steps to increase people's incomes and improve their livelihoods despite the scarcity in job opportunities, which is due to the continued growth of the labour force. In addition to those factors, underemployment in poor countries is increasing due to low productivity, lack of control over the information regarding the job market, the mismatch between training and market requirements, difficulties in financing employment programmes and the lack of incentives to promote entrepreneurship for youth and women.

In addition to those bottlenecks, another salient issue is the youthfulness of the population. In Senegal, 40 per cent of the population is under 15 years old and 55 per cent is in the age range of 15 to 34 years old, in an environment largely dominated by the rural and informal sectors, which represent 90 per cent of existing jobs. That is also true for women and migrants, for whom independence is not an option but an urgent necessity. We also note a relatively high rate of dependency among the unemployed, which tends to lead to workers having incomes that are by and large insufficient to cover all their family expenses.

Despite those difficulties, it is important to note that employment remains a key mechanism

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for reducing the risk of poverty and social exclusion through its ability to contribute to wealth distribution, improvements in social cohesion and access to decent living conditions and financial autonomy. As labour compensation constitutes almost all of the population's income, employment fills a social function, thus giving rise to the need to adopt effective measures based on a common understanding of the challenges related to accessing and retaining a decent job. Similarly, if employment is a cornerstone of poverty eradication, the fact remains that low income and job insecurity undermine the quality of life of workers, increase their vulnerability and affect its effectiveness as a tool in the fight to eradicate poverty. That reality, which is just as tenacious as it is cruel, deserves special attention, both within national development policies and strategies and in the post-2015 development programme, given employment's strong positive impact on the lives of populations and in reducing the risk of poverty.

In that context, the Government of Senegal has embarked on a process of massive job creation through the revival of economic activity and support for the development of private companies with high functioning labour forces, in public works, textiles and clothing manufacture, tourism, agriculture and services. In addition to the establishment of a job market information system, the Government has adopted a particular strategy based on better management and employability of the labour force, strengthening the effectiveness and the transparency of the labour market and the establishment of the national agency for the promotion of youth employment.

In that regard, my delegation believes that the post-2015 development agenda should, inter alia, focus on strategies that support the industrial transformation of developing countries, especially in Africa, and to promote a system of financing and supervision of entrepreneurship. Similarly, emphasis should be placed on priority measures, which include the promotion of tax regimes that are more favourable to productive investment projects; creating conditions that increase the level and structure of jobs in the national economy, ensuring a better consideration of employment in economic policies of the State; strengthening the management capacity of existing jobs in the agricultural and informal sectors; and the quantitative and qualitative improvement of the management system of the labour market.

I hope that at the end of this exercise the promotion of employment and decent work will find its rightful place in the post-2015 development agenda.

Mrs. Kage (Germany): Germany aligns itself with the statement made by the Head of the Delegation of the European Union this morning (see A/68/PV.88).

The year 2015 will be an important year in international politics. The international community will take stock of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and adopt the post-2015 development agenda. Great progress has been achieved in reaching the Millennium Development Goals. The proportion of people living in extreme poverty was cut in half, even before 2015. However, reduction of extreme poverty has not yet been sufficiently achieved. There are still some 1.3 billion people suffering from hunger. That is unacceptable.

A holistic and multidimensional understanding of poverty is needed to fight the root causes of poverty and hunger. The post-2015 development agenda should reinforce the international community's commitment to poverty eradication and sustainable development and set out a single comprehensive and coherent framework. That understanding includes the necessary foundations for sustainable development such as health and education, sustainable and decent jobs, and fair income.

Germany promotes a strong emphasis on employment and decent jobs for all in the post-2015 development agenda, including the achievement of full and productive employment and decent work for men and women alike, with particular attention being paid to the most vulnerable groups. We particularly support prominently addressing the respect for and promotion and realization of fundamental principles in rights at work, including for migrant workers, in accordance with the International Labour Organization (ILO) Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. Germany further promotes the establishment and maintenance of social protection floors for all, according to ILO Recommendation No. 202, including basic income security for children, elderly persons and persons of active age in cases of sickness, unemployment, disability or maternity. We also support the promotion of social dialogue, which is essential for people's empowerment and participation as well as a clear reference and target level to tackling youth unemployment.

In supporting our partner countries, we have achieved positive results through a number of measures. First, vocational education and training is directed at enhancing employability and labour supply. Secondly, labour demand interventions such as private sector development are used to create new jobs. Thirdly, active labour market policies and instruments to help new entrants in the labour market through such measures as youth social work or mentoring schemes by senior entrepreneurs. Last but not least, we rely on overall economic policy measures, including macroeconomic policies ranging from health care to infrastructure, which help to create an enabling environment.

I would like to take this opportunity to draw the Assembly's attention to a side event on youth employment that we will host together with the missions of Brazil, the ILO and WorldSkills International on the occasion of the Economic and Social Council Youth Forum on 2 June, entitled "Skilled for Excellence and Development". Actions for youth employment are urgently needed because we cannot risk losing this generation.

Our overarching vision is the sustainable eradication of poverty in all its dimensions, which has to be achieved while at the same time respecting planetary limits. Progress towards the eradication of poverty and sustainable development will not be achievable without decent work for all, and it will be meaningless if we do not also address the issues of peace and security, promote good governance and the rule of law and ensure respect for human rights for all.

Mr. Kydyrov (Kyrgyzstan) (*spoke in Russian*): The international community and Kyrgyzstan feel the acute need to have effective instruments and mechanisms for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In Kyrgyzstan, we have taken comprehensive measures in our country's strategic documents to fulfil and implement the MDGs. In particular, in the national strategy for sustainable development, we note that the problems of human and social development of the country occupy a central place in the national policy of the Kyrgyz Republic. They include reducing poverty, ensuring opportunities to receive an education, good public health systems and favourable living conditions in order that the country's most vulnerable citizens are protected. Those goals are consistent with the MDGs; they are the outline of our country's strategy for the next few years.

The wealth of natural resources in the Kyrgyz Republic, if they are well managed, could ensure significant opportunities for economic development. Agriculture is an important sector of our economy, representing 31 per cent of our gross domestic product. Nearly two-thirds of the residents of Kyrgyzstan — 3.5 million out of 5.4 million — are working in the agricultural sector, and 40 per cent of the poor live in agricultural regions. Therefore, reducing poverty in Kyrgyzstan is directly linked to the development of the economy. As a mountainous country, we also need the corresponding capability to take effective action in emergency situations caused by natural disasters.More than 90 per cent of our country's territory has experienced over 20 serious natural disasters. With the impact of climate change, we face new threats and challenges, in particular in agricultural areas.

The difficult conditions have led to the increased migration of the working population to cities and emigration to more developed countries. In recent years, the rise in the number of people of a working age has more than doubled the employment rate. Taking into account the fact that it is mostly men who travel to find work, the number of women working in agriculture has risen and now stands at 47 per cent. A trend is emerging in Kyrgyzstan. The higher the economic development in a specific region, the greater the number of women who work, and vice versa. In effect, the rate of women's employment is its own economic barometer, determining the amount of development and the overall level of progress in the region.

Given that employment is particularly significant to the development of the country's economy, Kyrgyzstan is working to develop a long-term programme on the regulation of women's employment. The steps that we have taken have already enabled us to reduce the level of unemployment among women from 63 per cent in 2009 to 52 per cent in 2014. In order to ensure sustainable development and reduce extreme poverty, our national development plan seeks to diversify the economy by developing infrastructure in rural areas and increasing sustainable agricultural productivity, thereby guaranteeing food security and income in agricultural regions, while minimizing environmental threats. The plan also aims to develop national and regional labour markets and to improve employment opportunities through the effective regulation of labour migration and more training of the workforce.

In general, Kyrgyzstan has made significant progress and achieved the three MDGs on the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, ensuring environmental sustainability, and establishing a global partnership for development. The current poverty indicator is significantly lower than the target, but we must ensure sustainability in that regard. The truth is, the global financial and political events of 2010 had a negative impact on the current poverty level in Kyrgyzstan. We need to overcome many other challenges in order to lay the foundation for the healthy development of our State, with strong democratic principles and a high standard of living for the population. The implementation of all the aforementioned measures is possible only through an effective international partnership.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): I thank the President for organizing this important and timely debate.

The concept note for this meeting explores in an excellent way the challenges and opportunities in the field of poverty eradication, full employment and decent work. The Netherlands aligns itself with the statement made this morning by the observer of the European Union (see A/68/PV.88). Today, I will make three points on the link between poverty eradication, full employment, decent work and social protection. All those issues are very important to the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

On poverty and employment, we feel the following. Jobs and employment must be a high post-2015 priority. More than 80 per cent of households that have escaped extreme poverty have done so because the head of the household found a job. Economic growth that favours poor people must take place in the context of sustainable development. That is the most effective way to raise incomes, generate jobs and permanently lift people out of poverty.

Growth must be twinned with economic transformation and shifting labour into higher productivity. Quality education is needed to facilitate that transformation and to move people into more productive jobs. Private enterprise provides more than 90 per cent of jobs in the developing world. The conditions must therefore be right for firms and companies to grow and, as a result, to employ more people productively and sustainably. Businesses can play a crucial role in poverty eradication and sustainable development. They must focus on innovation and technology and take responsibility for the social and environmental impacts of their activities.

Secondly, on decent work, jobs must be secure and safe and be paid fairly. People should have the freedom to organize and participate in decisions that affect them. Promoting decent work standards helps to formalize jobs in the informal sector. Women, young people and those with disabilities are often excluded from our labour markets or face discrimination when they are in the market. Access to employment and career opportunities must be equal for all. Women should have the same economic rights as men to inherit property, to sign a contract, to register a business or to open a bank account. Stigma and discrimination are often the greatest barriers to those with disabilities obtaining employment. They should be supported in obtaining and maintaining employment. A necessary condition to ensure such rights is an end to all kinds of violence against women and girls.

Thirdly, social protection should be part of a wider strategy for inclusive and sustainable growth to end poverty. It can guarantee a basic income. It will reduce barriers to accessing basic and maternal health care, nutrition, education and a healthy environment. Social protection systems must contribute to a Government's wider priorities and accompany economic transformation. Interventions need, of course, to be tailored to the country context. We must take into consideration when, why and how to use social protection systems and must first and foremost promote equality of opportunity.

To sum up, linking jobs, poverty eradication and sustainable development is vital to the post-2015 development agenda. At the same time, the focus should continue to be on the disparities in achieving the Millennium Development Goals in order to make sure that no one is left behind. The Kingdom of the Netherlands is a United Nations partner for peace, just as development is our mission statement. We want to be a partner in sharing our expertise and experience with the United Nations and its other Member States in order to accelerate action on sustainable development. We will continue to contribute to the post-2015 agenda discussions.

Mr. Manongi (United Republic of Tanzania): The United Republic of Tanzania welcomes this meeting. It is timely and an important contribution to the discussion that we should have in this forum.

We believe that employment must be at the centre of the post-2015 development agenda. The President of my country, Mr. Kikwete, has committed Tanzania to engaging in an agenda that promotes full employment and decent work at the national level. We would want to see a similar commitment to such an agenda at the regional and the global levels. In that regard, we welcome this opportunity and this discussion.

We thank the International Labour Organization (ILO) for its leadership and engagement as a party commitment to advancing that agenda not only at the international level but also, as we know in our own case, at the national level. The ILO has had unique foresight in that regard. We recall the ILO World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, which provided recommendations that remain relevant and compelling today with regard to employment, decent work and social protections.

As we formulate the sustainable development goals and as we proceed to consider a post-2015 agenda, our view is that we are not necessarily bound to reinvent the wheel. There are propositions and proposals that are worth reviewing and there are propositions and recommendations that could surely contribute fruitfully to the kind of discussions that we are having and that we must have. Our view is that we have to engage partners beyond States parties. We must engage civil society and pursue public-private initiatives to enrich the discussion we are having and to ensure that we have concrete deliverables at the end of the process.

To conclude, the United Republic of Tanzania again associates itself with the views that have been expressed by the representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, who spoke on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and the representative of Lesotho, who spoke on behalf of the Group of African States (see A/68/PV.88). We are certain that, if there is a desire, progress can made because there are ample recommendations on the table. At the moment, what we need is the desire to move forward and a commitment to ensure that action is taken on the proposals on the table. The Assembly can count on our support in ensuring that progress is made.

Mrs. Byaje (Rwanda): I thank the President for organizing this important and timely meeting.

My country aligns itself with the statements made by the representatives of the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Lesotho, who spoke on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the Group of African States, respectively (see A/68/PV.88).

As the concept note circulated by the President highlights, the issue of sustainable development has come to the forefront of global discourse today. We believe that we need to pursue not only sustainable development goals but also a development path that advances meaningful development opportunities, including full employment and decent work. That will only be possible if we commit ourselves to uprooting the deeply entrenched inequalities that still characterize our societies today.

The outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, "The future we want" (resolution 66/288, annex), outlined a broad framework for global action for the future we want and a post-2015 global development agenda. Now the task falls to us to implement it. We believe that a holistic implementation of the three pillars of sustainable development is necessary, with poverty eradication, inclusive development and environmental conservation at the centre of the future we want. The World Bank found in 2013 that nothing drives poverty reduction as much as access to jobs and increasing wages and that employment is a cornerstone for development that connects living standards, productivity and social cohesion, all of which are critical for achieving inclusive growth.

Keeping people in jobs in developing countries, especially in Africa, is a challenge. However, the challenge of poverty reduction and employment is made tougher by crises resulting from economic turmoil, armed conflict or natural disasters, which tend to worsen poverty. Special attention therefore needs to be devoted to countries emerging from conflicts.

Since the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, my country has understood the importance of creating employment and decent jobs for the purposes of poverty reduction. Allow me to share some our homegrown solutions. To address the many challenges we faced as a country emerging from conflict, the Government of Rwanda adopted its comprehensive Vision 2020, which focuses on 7 per cent annual economic growth in order to reduce poverty, with job creation as one of the top priorities.

To achieve the objectives of Vision 2020, the Government implemented a short-term development plan called the Economic Development and Poverty

Reduction Strategy I, which ran from 2008 to 2012, and we are now implementing the second phase. The Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy II aims at rapid economic growth, poverty reduction, the creation of more off-farm jobs, the reduction of external dependency and making the private sector an engine of development. Equitable and quality education for improved employability should be a future development priority. Other development targets include ensuring education for all, increasing the number of vocational and technical schools, and making sure that all Rwandans have health insurance coverage, which will allow them to lead healthy and productive lives.

In the area of decent work, employment and social protection, emphasis has been put on ensuring women's equal pay with men. Rwanda has further enacted laws making possible equal land sharing and property and inheritance rights. A strong emphasis has been put on access to productive assets and financial services, agricultural supports, and technology, including information and communications technology. As far as job creation and development are concerned, the most important initiatives include the launching of the Labour Intensive Local Development Programme in 2003, and the creation of the Rwanda Workforce Development Agency in 2007.

Creating new jobs is the result of well-planned investments that take into account development activities, regional integration, the creation of reliable domestic markets, the development of flourishing business networks, support for small- and medium-sized businesses, capacity-building, adapting school curricula to modern life, reinforcing the private sector, and creating an appropriate environment for priority sectors. Our Government established a set of incentives to attract people in various activities relating to service provision and production, investment in and acquisition and implementation of technology opportunities, all of which contributes to the creation of decent jobs. While the majority of our people remain unemployed or underemployed, and are not being remunerated, we are intensifying efforts to keep up the momentum and to ensure that there are adequate jobs available for our youth.

In conclusion, let me acknowledge that unemployment and poverty reduction issues are very complex, but addressing them is crucial for peace, economic growth and sustainable development. Unemployment affects national and, by extension, international security. That is why achieving full employment and decent work requires global actions, including giving priority to transformative approaches that address poverty and employment in the elaboration and implementation of the post-2015 development agenda.

Ms. Engelbrecht Schadtler (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We align ourselves with the statement delivered by the representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China (see A/68/PV.88).

According to a recent report of the International Labour Organization, more than 197 million people worldwide are unemployed and, despite the fact that moderate economic growth is expected for 2013-2014, it is estimated that the rate of global unemployment will increase again, with 202 million unemployed in 2013 and 3 million more in 2014, a quarter of whom will be in the advanced economies, while the other three quarters will be in various regions around the world.

Job creation is an urgent need and one of the main priorities for the majority of countries. It will remain an important factor far beyond 2015. Therefore factors such as youth employment, poor quality employment and access to opportunities should be taken into account in the framework of the sustainable development goals. As countries grow and develop, labour markets, employment and lifestyles change. That dynamic has an impact on the pace and extent of poverty reduction. One of the main objectives for development is to transform the structure of production and employment.

Venezuela recognizes the range of situations that exist in terms of meeting social needs and in terms of wealth and revenue distribution. That is why Venezuela has adopted a multidimensional approach to combatting poverty, which addresses it not only as an economic problem, but as a social problem arising from exclusion, exploitation and inequality, which are generated by the prevailing international economic order. This system hinders efforts to meet basic needs, such as subsistence, protection, participation and knowledge. That is why the actions taken by the Venezuelan State are aimed at addressing the structural causes of poverty, and goals have set to allow us to to tackle other key components within our social fabric, such as the special needs of women, youth and vulnerable groups and the importance of agriculture and the informal economy, among others.

For our country, social protection is a cross-cutting issue that encompasses all segments of society through the implementation of inclusion strategies. The implementation of social missions has led to significant advances in the area of development, particularly with regard to the reduction of levels of poverty, the gradual inclusion of segments of society that had historically been excluded, the universal enjoyment of social and economic rights, a more equitable distribution of income and wealth, and the promotion of social and civic participation in public decision-making forums. Such measures are necessary in order to eradicate poverty and build a society of free and equal citizens.

In the current context in which we continue to suffer the adverse effects of the global economic and financial crisis, we must maintain the commitments taken on by States to ensuring that development assistance is not reduced. In that connection, States must also adopt appropriate measures to respond to the crisis, for example continuing to focus on creating decent jobs and ensuring that the benefits reach the most vulnerable groups.

International cooperation — such as the commitment of developed countries to allocating 0.7 per cent of their gross national income to official development assistance, as well as South-South cooperation, technical cooperation and the exchange of best practices — is essential to the promotion of development. It is also crucial to carry out the necessary reforms of the international financial and economic system in order to make it more democratic.

Employment connects people to society and the economy in which they live. Access to safe, productive and fairly paid jobs — either salaried positions or self-employment — is fundamental to the self-esteem of individuals and families. It affirms their sense of belonging to a community and allows them to make a productive contribution. The move towards inclusive and sustainable development will not be possible if millions of people are denied the opportunity to earn a living in decent and fair conditions.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 23?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 3.45 p.m.

United Nations A/68/PV.90

General Assembly
Sixty-eighth session

Official Records

90th plenary meeting
Thursday, 5 June 2014, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ashe ..... (Antigua and Barbuda)

The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

Agenda item 116 (*continued*)

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(h) Appointment of a member of the Joint Inspection Unit

Note by the President of the General Assembly (A/68/898)

The President: As indicated in document A/68/898, as a result of the expiration on 31 December 2014 of the term of office of Mr. Tadanori Inomata (Japan), the General Assembly is required, during its current session, to appoint a person to serve as a member of the Joint Inspection Unit for a full term of office beginning on 1 January 2015 and expiring on 31 December 2019.

In accordance with the procedures described in article 3, paragraph 1, of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, and having consulted with the regional group concerned, I have requested that Jordan propose a candidate to replace Mr. Inomata.

I would like to remind Members that, in accordance with resolution 59/267 of 23 December 2004, the candidate should have experience in at least one of the following fields: oversight, audit inspection, investigation, evaluation, finance, project evaluation, programme evaluation, human resources management, public administration, monitoring and/or programme performance, as well as knowledge of the United Nations system and its role in international relations.

As also indicated in document A/68/898, as a result of the consultations held in accordance with article 3, paragraph 2, of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, including consultations with the President of the Economic and Social Council and the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chairman of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, I submit to the Assembly the candidature of Mr. Rajab Sukayri (Jordan) for appointment as a member of the Joint Inspection Unit for a five-year term of office beginning 1 January 2015 and expiring on 31 December 2019.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to appoint the candidate?

It was so decided.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (h) of agenda item 116.

Agenda item 34

Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development

Report of the Secretary-General (A/68/868)

Draft resolution (A/68/L.47)

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Georgia to introduce draft resolution A/68/L.47.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506. Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

14-42094 (E)

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Mr. Imnadze (Georgia): Today I have the honour to introduce the draft resolution entitled "Status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia", contained in document A/68/L.47, under agenda item 34, "Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development", and to seek the Assembly's support for it. In fact, I seek its support for a principle — a principle of morality and international law; for a humanitarian cause; and in order to once again affirm that it is unacceptable to use force to change demography, redraw borders or deny a population its right to return.

Today's draft resolution is designed to reaffirm the inalienable right of all forcibly displaced persons of all ethnicities and religious beliefs evicted from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia, to return to their places of origin in a voluntary, safe and dignified manner, and for their property rights to be respected, in accordance with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. Hundreds of thousands of displaced persons, ethnic Georgians, Abkhaz, Greeks, Estonians and Ossetians — Christian, Jewish and Muslim — are still denied access to their homes as a result of waves of displacement. We should respond to their hopes and expectations. We should support their dream of a day when they can return to their homes to heal their wounds and restore their broken neighbourhoods. We should attempt to vindicate their sincere belief that resolute calls from the international community will bear fruit.

In the report before us, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon underscores that

> "[i]t is essential to recognize return as both a human right and a humanitarian issue that must be addressed irrespective of any solution to an underlying conflict" (*A/68/868, para. 45*).

We thank the Secretary-General for that reminder. When introducing this draft resolution every year, we leave politics aside and focus exclusively on the humanitarian dimension of the problem. Its primary focus on human rights is a deliberate choice in order to avoid political speculation when the fundamental rights of the displaced are at stake. Given the scale of displacement and the amount of time that has passed, the importance of arriving at a final response to address the needs of the displaced is more urgent than ever.

The draft resolution and the report of the Secretary-General serve as the reference points for the Geneva international discussions, which remain the only platform between Georgia and Russia pursuant to the six-point ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008 for addressing the security and humanitarian issues, with the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Union present. The draft text, which was first adopted in May 2008 (resolution 62/249), months before the Geneva discussions were established, reinvigorates and reinforces the Geneva format and complements the work on humanitarian issues. It encourages the participants in the Geneva talks to redouble their efforts to ensure respect for human rights and create favourable conditions for people's safe, voluntary and dignified return. It further confirms one of the main principles, as underlined in the statement just quoted from the Secretary-General's report, that the political dimension of the Geneva discussions should not hijack the fundamental human rights of those concerned.

The draft resolution before us, therefore, is not a political tool aimed at obstructing the ongoing negotiations, as one delegation has repeatedly and misleadingly suggested. On the contrary, it forms a basis for respect for the human rights of all those uprooted from the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali. Regrettably, the establishment of a comprehensive timetable remains unresolved. To that end, the Secretary-General calls on those involved in the Geneva discussions to engage constructively on the issue, building on international law and the relevant principles. My Government is committed to those talks and to the principle of the non-use of force. My country has made that pledge unilaterally and reiterated it on numerous occasions at the highest level. We still expect the Russian Federation to reciprocate it.

The Government of Georgia continues its efforts to remedy the plight of the internally displaced persons (IDPs), in accordance with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, without prejudice to their right to return. The implementation of the State strategy on internally displaced persons and its updated action plan, as well as the new law on internally displaced persons from the occupied territories of Georgia, have brought about significant improvements with regard to the issues of providing appropriate living conditions to the IDPs, financial assistance, proper registration, procedures for the timely granting of IDP status to every affected person, family reunions, ensuring the right of property

restitution, the provision of appropriate health care, education and employment in a non-discriminatory manner and so on.

Let me briefly update Members on the current situation on the ground. The continuing installation of barbed-wire fences and the expansion of the zone of occupation have caused further displacement, cutting off entire villages and dividing families living in the adjacent areas. It is particularly alarming that some representatives of the authorities in control in the occupied regions, most recently in Abkhazia, have periodically called for further discriminatory measures against ethnic Georgians.

The gravity of the situation was also witnessed and highlighted by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Navi Pillay, who travelled to Georgia last month. She made a clear reference to the absence of any internationally mandated monitoring mechanism and the almost complete isolation of those regions. Referring particularly to the Tskhinvali region as

> "one of the most inaccessible places on Earth, with no access permitted for international agencies, except the International Committee of the Red Cross".

Ms. Pillay underlined the devastating consequences of the so-called borderization activities along the administrative boundary lines,

> "further impeding the right to freedom of movement for IDPs and the enjoyment of rights to property, water, health, education and access to religious and cultural sites".

It is totally unacceptable that Ms. Pillay and Mr. Chaloka Beyani, Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, were repeatedly denied access to the occupied regions, contrary to the spirit of the draft resolution, which calls for unimpeded access for humanitarian activities.

Let me conclude my remarks with something that we have said before. Each and every one of those hundreds of thousands of people carries a dream in their hearts — the dream of returning to the soil that nurtured generations of their ancestors and of sharing it with their children.

This year, the issue of security in the GUAM area and the problem of forcible displacement worldwide have topped the international agenda. In that light, I believe that today, the General Assembly will be even more united, principled and decisive in its support in affirming the fundamental principles enshrined in the draft resolution. I hope that Members will add their voice to strengthen this humanitarian cause and vote in favour of the draft resolution and in support of international law, the moral principles of humanity and, ultimately, the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Lupan (Republic of Moldova): As the representative of the Republic of Moldova, I speak also on behalf of Georgia, Ukraine and the Republic of Azerbaijan — the countries of the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development — GUAM. This is the seventh consecutive year that action is to be taken on the draft resolution before us (A/68/L.47) since its introduction to the General Assembly. It is regrettable that many security, human rights and humanitarian challenges in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia still remain unresolved.

The States members of GUAM are convinced that the humanitarian concerns of the affected population, including internally displaced persons, continue to be a priority and that the issue must be addressed as soon as possible. We are disappointed that no substantial progress has been made in the areas of security, human rights or the humanitarian field concerning the internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees from Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia. Moreover, since the adoption of resolution 67/109, the situation has further deteriorated, creating additional impediments to the rights of internally displaced persons.

The matters of our particular concern remain the continuing fencing activity along the administrative boundary lines, as well as the continuing detentions and occurrence of constant illegal and artificial impediments to the freedom of movement, such as denying the population access to their homes and farmlands, the possibility of timely medical evacuation and adequate access to schools. In that context, GUAM views positively Georgia's strategy for engagement through cooperation, which aims to build trust and confidence among the divided communities.

We, the States members of GUAM, reiterate our well-established position that the way to resolve the long-standing issues is through a negotiated and mutually agreed approach on the basis of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders. We

believe that the Geneva discussions are a important forum for strengthening stability in Georgia and for making progress on the security, humanitarian and other remaining challenges, as the Secretary-General himself puts it in his most recent report A/68/868 of May 2014. Draft resolution A/68/L.47 calls for the intensification of the current talks in order to create the conditions for the safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons and refugees to their places of origin. We appreciate the role of the annual reporting by the Secretary-General, pursuant to General Assembly resolutions, as it is a useful tool for maintaining the international community's greatly needed involvement in and attention to the issue of the internally displaced persons. Only addressing it in an urgent manner, including by the General Assembly, will contribute to its solution.

The States members of GUAM stress their call for unimpeded access for humanitarian actors to the displaced population and those living in Abkhazia, Georgia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia. We regret the absence of any internationally mandated monitoring mechanism in those areas. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Navi Pillay, made efforts during her visit to Georgia to visit Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as my colleague has said. Once again her access was denied, thereby preventing any monitoring of respect for basic human rights there. She expressed her concern about the isolation and fencing of South Ossetia, in particular, which further impedes the right to freedom of movement for IDPs and the enjoyment of rights to property, water, health, education and access to religious and cultural sites. In recent weeks, two more villages have been cut off from South Ossetia by the expanding barrier, according to her report.

The draft resolution before us forms the fundamental basis for restoring the human rights of all those evicted from the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions and aims to encourage the participants in the Geneva talks to renew their efforts to create the necessary conditions for people's voluntary, safe and dignified return. Freedom of movement, property and access to basic services are basic rights that do not impede or interfere with political processes, but rather support a resolution process based on respect for the rights of all parties involved.

Taking into account such principles and keeping in mind that the main goal of the draft resolution is respect for the right of the safe and dignified return of the IDPs and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia, the States members of GUAM consider the draft resolution to be humanitarian in nature and will vote in favour of it. Our decision arises from our strong and long-standing commitment to fundamental humanitarian principles, including the right to return, property rights and humanitarian access.

Mr. Rishchynski (Canada): Canada plays an active role in promoting the rights and well-being of refugees and internally displaced peoples, and we are committed to continuing to work with the international community to address both long-standing and emerging protection challenges. Displacement is not only a humanitarian concern; it is also a key human rights and development issue. Identifying and implementing durable solutions to protracted situations of displacement must remain a high priority for all of us. Furthermore, all returns of displaced persons must be guided by humanitarian principles and be safe, dignified, informed and voluntary.

(*spoke in French*)

The guiding principles with regard to the displacement of persons within their own countries, which form the key international framework for the protection of internally displaced persons (IDPs), establishes an essential structure for monitoring and defending the interests of such people in order to meet their needs for assistance and protection. Canada adheres to the wording of the draft resolution in favour of unimpeded access for humanitarian workers to IDPs and refugees in all regions of Georgia affected by conflict (A/68/L.47). Furthermore, we support the appeals asking for all the participants in the Geneva discussions to step up their efforts to establish lasting peace, to commit to adopting the best possible methods for building confidence and to establish favourable security conditions for the voluntary, safe and unimpeded return of IDPs and refugees to their countries.

(*spoke in English*)

Canada continues to support Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty within its internationally recognized borders. We denounce the Russian Federation's continued installation of fences and other physical barriers along the administrative lines of the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Canada also strongly condemns Russia's aggression in

Crimea and eastern regions of Ukraine. Those latest violations of a sovereign nation's territorial integrity only further demonstrate Russia's disregard for international rule of law.

Canada is a strong supporter of freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. We will continue to work with other like-minded countries and the international organizations to ensure that those around the world who have been forcibly displaced are able to exercise those fundamental rights.

Mr. Pavlichenko (Ukraine): While we align ourselves with the statement made by the representative of Moldova on behalf of the Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova Group, I would like to make several comments in my national capacity.

It is beyond any doubt that the issue of internally displaced persons (IDPs), which we are considering here today, deserves our utmost attention, as internal displacement in the world is growing rapidly, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. As a principal policymaking body of the United Nations, the General Assembly should be actively engaged in tackling the problem of internal displacement, both by preventing situations that might lead to internal displacement and by dealing effectively with operative factors that have already led to displacement.

It has been seven years since the General Assembly first took up the consideration of the draft resolution before us today (A/68/L.47). While noting with satisfaction that the efforts of the international discussions in Geneva and the humanitarian engagement of a variety of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, and other actors, have contributed to some improvements in the security and humanitarian situation on the ground, we regret to acknowledge that security, humanitarian, human rights and development challenges remain unresolved.

Regretfully, I have to acknowledge that the issue of internal displacement has become relevant to my country, Ukraine. The temporary occupation of Crimea by Russia has resulted in the internal displacement of more than 10,000 civilians; that number continues to rise. The Government of Ukraine is taking all the measures needed to address the humanitarian needs of that new category of population in Ukraine, most of whom were forced to leave their homes due to the Russian Federation occupation of Crimea and its current destabilization activity in the eastern part of Ukraine.

Unfortunately, the number of IDPs in Georgia is even higher, and their needs require the serious attention of the United Nations. In that regard, I would like to reiterate Ukraine's firm support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders and express our support for the draft resolution, the status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abhazia, Georgia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia. We call on all Member States that have not yet done so to reconsider their position and voice their support for that important document.

Mr. Kolga (Estonia): I am honoured to speak on behalf of the Baltic and Nordic States: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden, and my own country, Estonia.

This is the seventh consecutive year that action is taken on the draft resolution before us (A/68/L.47) since it was first introduced in the General Assembly (resolution 62/153). Unfortunately, no substantial progress has been made so far in the areas of security or human rights, or in the humanitarian field, with respect to the internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees from Abhazia, Georgia and the Tskhinvali region/ South Ossetia, Georgia. On the contrary, during the last year, the situation has deteriorated, creating additional impediments to the rights of the IDPs.

We note with profound concern the threats and increasing activities by foreign security forces to erect fences and other obstacles along administrative boundary lines in Georgia, between the territory administered by the Government in Tbilisi and the region of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia. Such activities, which contravene Georgia's territorial integrity, create significant hardship for residents on either side of the administrative boundary lines and serious challenges stability and security in those regions.

The draft resolution introduced today is humanitarian in nature. Our decision to support and vote in favour of it stems from our strong and long-lasting commitment to fundamental humanitarian principles, including the right to return, property rights and humanitarian access. We believe that the issue of IDPs requires continuing international attention, and only addressing it in an urgent manner would contribute to the solution

of the conflict. Continued international attention can have a significant impact on preventing similar threats in the future in other nearby regions.

Ahead of the upcoming international discussions scheduled to take place in Geneva on 17 and 18 June, we wish to call upon all the participants in the discussions to work together towards sustainable security and the humanitarian situation-related arrangements. We would also like to take this opportunity to reiterate our firm support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/68/L.47.

Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote before the vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Pankin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Yet again, the General Assembly has before it a draft resolution on the status of internally displaced persons and refugees in the Caucasus. Sadly, as in previous years, its sponsors are by no means guided by their stated noble humanitarian goals. This initiative continues to be politically motivated and shortsighted in its thrust. As in previous years, it does not take into account the political and legal realities in the region — specifically, the existence of two independent States, Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

It is indicative that, for a number of years already, the text of the draft resolution has been regurgitated, unaltered in its substance, save for a few minimal technical updates. Such a mechanical approach hardly reflects a genuine concern for the plight of the thousands of people who have had to abandon their homes as a result of Tbilisi's reckless policy. What we have is a clear attempt by Georgia to again draw attention away from the fundamental problems of internally displaced persons and refugees, the main reason for which can be attributed to the irresponsible actions of the Georgian authorities leading up to the armed attack on Tskhinvali in August 2008.

In practice, the Georgian delegation's regular submission of the issue of refugees and internally displaced persons for consideration by the United Nations hampers the discussion of that issue in the second working group of the Geneva discussions. Tskhinvali and Sukhumi have repeatedly warned that this would be the case if the Georgian side persued its policy of discussing this issue at the General Assembly without the participation of representatives from Abkhazia or South Ossetia. Sadly, those arguments were not taken on board by the draft resolution's sponsors.

Georgia is thereby not only blocking an objective discussion of important humanitarian issues, but is also greatly hampering the entire process of the Geneva discussions and hindering the search for mutually acceptable solutions on issues of security and humanitarian problems in the region. We have no doubt that the Georgian initiative is counterproductive and likely to further stall the complex talks taking place in Geneva, which have been an extremely important format for dialogue between the representatives of Abkazia, South Ossetia and Georgia.

In his report (A/68/868), the Secretary-General notes that the Geneva discussions provide an opportunity for constructive interaction and are a single forum in which the key stakeholders can discuss security, stability and humanitarian issues, in particular in relation to the return of refugees and internally displaced persons. The repeated year-in, year-out calls on all participants in the Geneva discussions to intensify their efforts to establish a durable peace and to commit to enhanced confidence-building measures seem rather clumsy in the light of the stubborn reluctance of Tbilisi to conclude, with South Ossetia and Abkhazia, binding arrangements on the non-use of force.

In view of all of this, the Russian Federation calls for a recorded vote on draft resolution A/68/L.47 and will vote against it. We trust that other Member States will also oppose this politicized initiative, which, in practice, does nothing to help resolve the humanitarian problems in the region.

Mr. Suazo (Honduras) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to make a statement in explanation of vote before the votin on draft resolution A/68/L.47, on the Status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia.

Honduras believes that the draft resolution refers to the inalienable rights of refugees to return to their homes and their lands and to enjoy access to their places of origin. In our view, that is a fundamental, internationally recognized and inalienable right.

Furthermore, the draft resolution is based on the principles of international humanitarian law and the norms and principles of international conventions and agreements on the human rights of refugees.

We believe that the draft resolution is apolitical in nature, as it deals with the specific situation of thousands of individuals who have been directly affected by a conflict, and that its text is purely humanitarian in scope. It also highlights the case of some 500,000 internally displaced persons and refugees of various ethnicities. Finally, my delegation believes that the draft resolution is also in line with the report of the Secretary-General (A/68/868) and with the process of verification and monitoring of the situation on the ground. This is the sole and most appropriate mechanism we have to truly monitor the situation. For those reasons, my delegation will vote in favour of draft resolution A/68/L.47.

The President: A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Albania, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Belgium, Belize, Bulgaria, Burundi, Canada, Central African Republic, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominica, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kiribati, Latvia, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Spain, Sweden, Tuvalu, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Vanuatu

Against:

Armenia, Belarus, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Nauru, Nicaragua, Russian Federation, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Viet Nam

Abstaining:

Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Benin, Bhutan, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Cyprus, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gabon, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Mongolia, Morocco, Namibia, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, South Africa, Suriname, Switzerland, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Zambia

Draft resolution A/68/L.47 was adopted by 69 votes to 13, with 79 abstentions (resolution 68/274).

[Subsequently, the delegation of the Plurinational State of Bolivia informed the Secretariat that it had intended to abstain; the delegation of Zimbabwe informed the Secretariat that it had intended to vote against.]

The President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Patriota (Brazil): Brazil supports the territorial integrity of Georgia and does not recognize the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. We acknowledge the difficulties arising from the high number of internally displaced persons and refugees and from the humanitarian pressures since the conflict with Russia in 2008.

We have once again abstained in the voting on the resolution, since we believe that it could prejudge issues that are subject to the Geneva process. We are concerned that the resolution could interfere with the negotiations in Geneva. Overcoming the challenges faced by internally displaced persons and refugees depends mainly on the creation of favourable political conditions for their return and the absence of fear of a resumption of conflict.

Brazil urges the parties to make efforts to identify lasting solutions to the situation of Georgian internally displaced persons and refugees, keeping in mind their right of return in particular. The Brazilian Government hopes that the dispute between Georgia and Russia can be resolved through dialogue in as short a time as

possible. We believe that confidence-building measures and cooperation are essential, and hope that every effort will be made to seek improved understanding between the parties, including in the framework of the Geneva process.

Mr. Minah (Sierra Leone): The consistency of Sierra Leone's votes on this issue reflects our unshakeable commitment to the principles that underlie resolution 68/274, just adoped. It also signals our affirmation of the rights of internally displaced persons and our support for those who are trying to resolve their plight. When called on to do so, we feel it is our place to support a system based on rules, rights and principles, as the international system is, and we, as a country that has been a beneficiary of that system, feel we should stand up and be counted.

Internally displaced persons may deserve our sympathy, and may get it; they may deserve our empathy, and may get it; but at times they need us to give our active and public support to their plight. We stand with all those who seek to resolve what they are going through, because we believe the concept of displacement is not only physical but psychological. We will remain by Georgia's side, and when called on will continue to express our support for the rights of the internally displaced.

Mr. Çevik (Turkey): I would like to briefly explain our position. At the outset, I would like to reaffirm Turkey's commitment to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders. In that regard, we are concerned that the conflicts in the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions of Georgia remain unresolved. The situation has serious economic, social and humanitarian consequences, primarily for the people of Georgia but also for the peoples of the Caucasus region as a whole.

Turkey supports all efforts aimed at achieving a peaceful resolution of these conflicts. We invite all parties to work towards a comprehensive and sustainable peace that also provides for the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees. As a country of the region and a neighbour of Georgia, we stand ready to contribute to all efforts to that end. We support the Geneva talks, which provide a valuable forum for finding practical solutions to the challenges faced by all parties and also address the issue of the voluntary, safe, dignified and unhindered return for IDPs and refugees. We call on all sides to engage seriously with one another in a cooperative manner in order to build confidence and move on to achieving tangible results.

Mr. Koncke (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Uruguay is a country that has been significantly involved, at the national and international level, in promoting, protecting and defending human rights and international humanitarian law. Commitment to international law and the principles of peaceful coexistence and territorial integrity has been a priority of our foreign policy. We believe it essential that all parties involved in these kinds of situations maintain, enhance and respect, impartially and consistently, the standards of international humanitarian law that constitute the foundation of the protection of civilians.

Uruguay considers it vital that the Geneva talks continue in order to reach a solution to the issues of security, stability and the humanitarian situation of the internally displaced persons and refugees in the region. We trust that the discussions will result in a positive outcome for those affected and establish the necessary conditions for their voluntary return to their homes, while respecting their human rights without discrimination. We consider the talks to be a high priority and we encourage the parties to make every effort to ensure their success. My delegation therefore considered it appropriate to abstain from voting on resolution 68/274.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 34?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.

United Nations A/68/PV.91

General Assembly
Sixty-eighth session

Official Records

91st plenary meeting
Friday, 6 June 2014, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ashe ..... (Antigua and Barbuda)

The meetinag was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 118 (*continued*)

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Draft resolution (A/68/L.48)

The President: Members will recall that the Assembly held a debate on agenda item 118 jointly with agenda item 14 and agenda item 123 at its 54th plenary meeting, on 20 November 2013. Members will also recall that, under agenda item 118, the Assembly adopted resolution 68/271 at its 85th plenary meeting, on 13 May 2014.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/68/L.48, entitled "United Nations Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela Prize". May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/68/L.48?

Draft resolution A/68/L.48 was adopted (resolution 68/275).

The President: I now give the floor to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

The Secretary-General: I offer my warmest congratulations to all members of the Assembly on the adoption of historic resolution 68/275, which establishes the United Nations Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela Prize. The international community still mourns the death of the great global leader, our Madiba.

I saw the outpouring of international emotion at the State memorial service in Johannesburg last December. The President of the General Assembly, together with many other leaders, was also there. South Africans were joined by leaders and people from around the world to pay solemn tribute to Nelson Mandela's humanity, integrity and remarkable strength, as well as the example that he left to us all of the power of an individual to transcend hatred and to achieve justice. He suffered enormous deprivation and pain for the cause of democracy and equality. At the end of his long journey, he died tranquilly and triumphantly, leaving behind a shining legacy of true peace.

As Nelson Mandela well knew, the struggle still continues. There is still terrible racism in our world. There is deplorable inequality. People suffer hatred, communities are divided and factions and nations are at war. Our best tribute to Nelson Mandela is found not in words or ceremonies but in actions that take up the torch he passed to us. The United Nations was honoured to stand fby Nelson Mandela and the people of South Africa until the apartheid regime ended. The General Assembly has a proud record of acting against apartheid and for Nelson Mandela. From the early days of sanctions to the more recent declaration of 18 July as Nelson Mandela International Day, the Assembly has placed itself on the right side of history, with the people who need us most. Today, the Assembly took another step forward in carrying on Nelson Mandela's lifelong work through this meaningful prize.

When Nelson Mandela himself accepted the Nobel Prize, he said he was a representative of the countless human beings who "recognized that an injury to one is an injury to all and therefore acted together in defence of justice and a common human decency". Nelson

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Mandela embodied that altruistic spirit of solidarity. The United Nations will forever be inspired by his example.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of South Africa.

Mr. Mamabolo (South Africa): On behalf of President Jacob Zuma of the Republic of South Africa and the Government and people of South Africa, I would like to thank and commend the Assembly for the initiative of establishing the United Nations Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela Prize. I would be remiss if I did not thank you, Mr. President, for your vote of confidence in appointing me to facilitate the consultation on the draft resolution on the Mandela Prize to be adopted today by consensus (A/68/L.48). In the same vein, I should also thank the Member States for their outstanding cooperation, solidarity and support during the facilitation. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General and his Office for gracing this occasion.

By adopting the resolution on the Mandela Prize, the General Assembly has expressed its appreciation for Mandela's leading role in and his support for Africa's struggle for liberation and unity. In his outstanding contribution to the creation of a non-racial, non-sexist, democratic South Africa, to the struggle for democracy internationally and to the promotion of a culture of peace throughout the world, Mandela has left a legacy that will benefit and inspire generations to come. He has set an example for the rest of the world and created history on his journey through life.

Mandela's greatness does not lie in any infallibility but in the memory that we too are made in the image of God, and can therefore create a world that is rather better than the one we have found. As a world leader who refused to accept injustice, Nelson Mandela had courage that helped to change our entire world. Despite his long years in captivity, Mr. Mandela left prison with a heart closed to any calls for settling scores. Instead, he was filled with a longing for truth and reconciliation, and for an understanding between all peoples. For the greater part of his life he was a beacon of this struggle. In his later years, he became a symbol of hope. In death, he stands confirmed as the embodiment of humanity's triumph. Our dignity and hope found expression in his life and our freedom and democracy are his cherished legacy.

In conclusion, the South African delegation is pleased to join the consensus on the draft resolution on the Mandela Prize.

The President: I would like to personally thank the Permanent Representative of South Africa for the patience and ability he demonstrated in conducting the informal consultations on my behalf.

I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Mayr-Harting (European Union): Along with other speakers today, the European Union and its member States would like to commend your initiative, Mr. President, in establishing the United Nations Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela Prize, as taken forward in resolution 68/257.

As the Secretary-General stressed, the resolution is an important step in carrying forward President Mandela's lifelong work. Nelson Mandela has been an example of what to strive for and how to strive for it. He taught us all a major lesson in reconciliation, political transition and social transformation. For millions of people inside and outside South Africa, his life is a major source of inspiration. A United Nations prize bearing his name will be a powerful instrument for rewarding achievement and for inspiring and motivating all those who dedicate their lives to the service of humankind, promoting the purposes and principles of the United Nations. As the resolution rightly emphasizes, it also honours and pays homage to Mandela's extraordinary legacy. We therefore warmly welcome its adoption.

We also want to thank the Ambassador of South Africa, Mr. Kingsley Mamabolo, for facilitating the consultations on the resolution. Mandela's life, and the prize through which we aim to honour it, will continue to remind us of South Africa's inspiring journey, which holds lessons for all of us. Alongside South Africa's political struggle, other battles have been waged to improve the lives of those who have been denied equality, social justice and economic opportunity. The European Union and its member States continue to stand with South Africa in those endeavours, consolidating our close relationship, which is strongly based on shared values.

To conclude, we believe there is no better way to honour the memory of Nelson Mandela than by

reaffirming our collective commitment to upholding the values of true and deep democracy, as well as human dignity, for which he fought so tirelessly. This prize will be both a recognition and expression of those values.

The President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 118.

Agenda item 10

Implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS

Report of the Secretary-General (A/68/825)

The President: I should now like to make an introductory statement.

I am pleased to welcome representatives to our annual review of the progress made in addressing the AIDS epidemic. At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report, entitled "Towards ending the AIDS epidemic: meeting the 2015 targets and planning for the post-2015 era" (A/68/825). The report outlines progress achieved in the 10 target areas that were unanimously set by our leaders in the 2011 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS.

The report sends a very clear message. The global solidarity and joint efforts of the international community are yielding significant gains against the epidemic, and bringing about a historic opportunity to lay the foundation for ending the scourge of AIDS. However, AIDS will remain a global challenge beyond 2015, and a sustained commitment and efforts will be required if we are indeed to defeat this scourge.

We cannot underestimate the global progress that has been made in addressing the AIDS challenge. It has been truly remarkable. Thanks to the advances of antiretroviral treatment, HIV diagnosis is no longer the death sentence it used to be in the early days of the epidemic. More than 10 million people in low- and middle-income countries are receiving that life-saving treatment. New HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths continue to decline globally. Progress has been particularly noteworthy in reducing the number of children born with HIV and in keeping their mothers alive.

But despite those significant gains, the epidemic is far from over. The number of HIV infections is still unacceptably high, at 2.3 million in 2012. More than half of those in need of antiretroviral treatment do not have access to it — with a glaring gap in access to paediatric treatment. The epidemic continues to impose a high toll on women and girls, young people and marginalized populations at higher risk of HIV infection. Furthermore, new challenges are emerging, such as the need to address the intersection of HIV and non-communicable diseases, particularly in light of the aging-related health challenges of the growing number of older adults living with HIV.

To address those daunting challenges, we must now accelerate action to reach those who are most vulnerable and underserved. We can make great strides to provide effective HIV response by promoting gender equality, preventing gender-based violence and by addressing stigma and discrimination, both in law and in practice. We must also ensure that the necessary resources are available and spent in the most efficient way, maximizing the synergies between the HIV response and the broader health and development priorities, such as education, nutrition, health and community system strengthening and social protection. Those measures are essential not only for achieving the commitments and targets set for 2015, but also for advancing towards the ambitious goal of ending the AIDS epidemic.

When I took office as President of the General Assembly, I chose "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage" as the theme for the sixty-eighth session. As Member States proceed in their deliberations, I hope they will consider the importance of ending the AIDS epidemic as a priority. In addition to the immediate and obvious benefits to the people and societies afflicted, the successes of HIV response can also offer useful lessons for addressing other health and development issues.

The ongoing deliberations on the post-2015 agenda and the proposed high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS both offer timely opportunities to delve further into those issues. Foremost, we need to take comprehensive stock of the progress and challenges in implementing the current goals and targets, set new ones and ensure strong accountability mechanisms to deliver results. With so much investment and effort having been made by all stakeholders, and with so many lives still on the line, it is a moral imperative to seize the opportunity of getting the job done. With continued political commitment, investment and innovation, we can make great strides toward ending AIDS and take a giant

step towards creating a healthier and more prosperous human family, living on a sustainable planet.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

The Secretary-General: Three years ago, Heads of State agreed on a set of ambitious targets to halt and reverse the spread of HIV and AIDS by the end of 2015. With just over 500 days to go, the international community has made great progress. Between 2011 and 2012 alone, the number of people accessing HIV treatment globally increased nearly 20 per cent. We are on track to providing antiretroviral therapy to 15 million people by 2015 and to eliminating mother-to-child transmission in just a few years.

The world is making solid headway in meeting some of the targets and commitments from the 2011 Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS (resolution 65/277, annex), such as expanding treatment access, eliminating HIV infections among children and keeping their mothers alive, and mobilizing resources. More countries are making specific efforts to take action. Domestic spending on HIV now accounts for more than half of global HIV resources.

At the same time, the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria has been strengthened. The recent replenishment of more than $12 billion over three years is a concrete demonstration of global solidarity. I thank Michel Sidibé and UNAIDS for their leadership — along with the efforts of all those across the United Nations system and beyond — to mobilize the global response. We have the tools, the science and the knowledge to end AIDS once and for all. But we cannot let confidence turn to complacency.

Progress remains uneven. Two out of three children who need treatment do not get it. Death rates among adolescents are increasing. Epidemics in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, the Middle East and North Africa are getting worse. And we are far behind on targets, such as reducing sexual transmission by 50 per cent and halving HIV transmission among people who inject drugs. Stigma, discrimination and the criminalization of people who are the most vulnerable to HIV are also getting worse in parts of the world. Several countries are not on track to meet any of the targets. We have the ability to harness the incredible power of HIV treatment as prevention. But this requires countries to accelerate access to early HIV testing and get people on treatment early and consistently. Less than 40 per cent of the 28.6 million people eligible for HIV treatment are receiving it. Many countries still suffer from inadequate supply of lifesaving drugs.

We cannot fail the people who need our help the most.

Those include young people, who are disregarded and underserved by health systems; women and girls, who face unchecked violence and abuse; and key populations, such as sex workers, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons, and intravenous drug users, who continue to face criminalization. That not only violates human rights, but drives people away from essential services. Human rights and access to health care are for all, not just for some.

The goal of ending AIDS remains a major challenge. I encourage Member States to continue the vital debate on ensuring how that important objective is best reflected in the post-2015 development agenda. As that work proceeds, the progress and important lessons from the global AIDS response can provide useful guidance. It has a record of breaking through political gridlock, integrating health care and mobilizing key actors from the public and private sector, civil society and the philanthropic community to help spur innovation and deliver results.

As we look ahead, we must do more to drive change. I welcome the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board recommendation that the General Assembly consider holding a high-level meeting in 2016 to review progress, identify remaining challenges and make concrete proposals for the next steps on our path to end AIDS. With the ongoing commitment of Member States along with the work of UNAIDS and the entire United Nations system, we have the capacity to deliver a great gift to the world — ending AIDS through the shared vision of no new HIV infections, no discrimination and no AIDS-related deaths.

Let us make good on that promise. Millions of lives depend on it. I thank the General Assembly for its commitment and resolve.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

Mr. Charles (Trinidad and Tobago): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 14 States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

CARICOM acknowledges that there has been notable success in the implementation of the

Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS (resolution S-26/2, annex) and the Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS (resolution 65/277, annex). That is evident in various ways, including through the 49 per cent reduction in the incidence of HIV in our regions, the decline by 52 per cent of AIDS-related deaths, from 24,000 deaths in 2001 to 11,000 deaths in 2012, the increase in antiretroviral coverage from 5 per cent to 67 per cent of the eligible population in 2001, and the virtual elimination of mother-to-child transmission in some of our member States. Additionally, there are strengthened national programmes with improved capacity for implementing prevention, treatment and care interventions. Investments have also been made to improve health systems and scale up services for ongoing care and support for increasing numbers of people who are living longer with HIV in our subregion.

Despite those achievements, however, there remains much to be done to achieve the goals and targets to which we as a region have committed and ultimately to address the challenge of getting to zero — with zero discrimination, zero new infections and zero AIDS-related deaths. As we set our sights on an AIDS-free CARICOM region, we do so in a drastically changing global environment and regional space. We are challenged by increasingly stringent eligibility requirements that limit access to resources, particularly for CARICOM States that have been classified by the World Bank as middle-income countries. CARICOM countries also face the growing challenge of expanding treatment, care and support services to meet the needs of increasing numbers of people who are living with HIV. Stigma and discrimination continue to be obstacles to testing, disclosure and access to prevention and treatment services.

The increasing concentration of the HIV epidemic among vulnerable groups of persons at higher risk also warrants renewed and more effective action to remove the obstacles that prevent universal access to a wide range of comprehensive and high quality health-care services. In our region, we intend to focus efforts on ensuring that the human rights of all of our citizens are respected in order to eradicate stigma and discrimination and ultimately end the HIV epidemic.

In response to the compelling epidemiological evidence that shows that certain populations continue to be vulnerable to HIV, the CARICOM subregion, through the Pan-Caribbean Partnership against HIV/AIDS (PANCAP) and in collaboration with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, mounted a programme of activities, which is continuing under the theme, Justice for All. The aim of the programme is to promote activities consistent with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to which all countries ought to be committed and which denounces discrimination.

CARICOM also continues to support and advocate for retaining HIV and AIDS as key issues in the post-2015 development agenda and for raising awareness of the importance of a more holistic and comprehensive approach to health. In addition to addressing the social determinants of health and of HIV in particular, the nexus between HIV and non-communicable diseases is also a growing concern in our region. CARICOM has articulated the importance of an open, transparent and inclusive process to shape the post-2015 development agenda, which must include health-related issues that must be adequately addressed.

To achieve new goals and targets in relation to reducing and eventually eliminating HIV, CARICOM submits that Governments must efficiently and effectively allocate adequate resources to meeting targets, developing plans for sustainability aligned with national strategic plans, performing cost analyses of different scenarios of action and addressing barriers to universal access to HIV treatment and care with the aim of finally eliminating that global menace.

In conclusion, CARICOM applauds the initiatives being undertaken by the United Nations, PANCAP in our region, and other partners in the fight against HIV/AIDS. CARICOM is and remains completely committed to working with all partners to achieve our objectives as the international community moves forward in addressing that decades-old pandemic.

Mr. Msosa (Malawi): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the 15 States members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC): Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, Swaziland, South Africa, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. SADC aligns with the statement to be delivered on behalf of the African Group.

We thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (A/68/825) on this important subject and take note of the recommendations contained therein.

HIV is one of the greatest health challenges and among the major challenges facing the SADC region. In combination with tuberculosis, the HIV epidemic is reversing economic and social gains achieved over many years and posing a significant challenge to national efforts to strengthen health systems and improve service delivery. From our experience, the effects of the combined HIV and tuberculosis epidemics have been further compounded by poverty, gender inequality, weak health-care and community systems, and insufficient access to treatment. The stigma associated with the disease at the personal, community and institutional levels further compounds the challenge of issuing an effective and comprehensive response to HIV and AIDS in our communities.

The HIV epidemic continues to be a major challenge to regional efforts to achieve Millennium Development Goal 1, as it exacerbates poverty and has a negative impact on economic development. In many instances, economic productivity at both the household and national levels has been stalled by the ravages of the epidemic. Families have lost valuable labour and economic support, further rendering them unable to break the cycle of household poverty.

That sober scenario notwithstanding, SADC countries have made great strides in the fight against HIV. Under the SADC HIV/AIDS Strategic Framework, States members have continued to implement multi-pronged interventions, which include condom promotion and distribution, behaviour change campaigns, expanded HIV testing and counseling services, and male circumcision. The SADC region has also made great strides towards scaling up access to treatment and prevention of mother-to-child transmission.

Although our region has suffered immensely as a result of the epidemic, SADC is convinced that the lessons we have learned have put us in a good position to make valuable contributions to global efforts to address the epidemic. As such, SADC member States remain ready to work constructively with all partners with a view to ensuring that future generations do not suffer from the diseases that have afflicted us.

The pain and suffering we have witnessed and continue to witness daily as a result of the epidemic have served to enforce our commitment to the elimination of HIV and AIDS. As a result of that commitment, two months after the fact we continue to be dismayed that the resolution on women, the girl child and HIV/AIDS was needlessly subjected to a recorded vote at the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women. We remain convinced that there was no justification for the resolution to have been hijacked from the floor for secondary causes.

Expert after expert from our capitals has reiterated that prevention measures — including promoting condom use, changing risky sexual behaviour and delaying the sexual debut of young girls — have been efficacious in reducing the spread of HIV infection. The report of the Secretary-General before us speaks to those facts. It is our hope that henceforth, as members of the international community, we will continue to strive to consolidate our common objective of ending the epidemic, rather than seeking to use United Nations forums to cultivate divisions at every opportunity.

In our region, women and girls continue to bear the brunt of the HIV epidemic. In addition to their physical vulnerabilities to infection, inequalities between men and women continue to exacerbate their particularly challenged position. In many settings, women continue to fall victim to gender-based violence, which exposes them to an increased risk of HIV infection.

While the gender dimension of HIV/AIDS has gained increased attention over the past few decades, more attention is still needed on the plight of HIV orphans who are left to head households following the death of their parents. More attention needs to be devoted to assisting those orphans and vulnerable children, most of whom also survive in child-headed household environments. That scenario contributes to high levels of school drop-out and to their failure to progress to high school, college and other tertiary learning institutions to complete their education and provide for their families. Strong social protection policies and practices therefore need to be put in place to ensure that vulnerable children are empowered to finish school and realize their potential.

Lack of tertiary education exacerbates gender imbalances and leads to increased poverty, especially for girls and women. It exposes them to extreme vulnerability by leading them to seek alternative and riskier coping mechanisms, such as sex for favours and alcohol and substance abuse. It is for that reason that SADC members are convinced that more needs to be done in the area of poverty reduction, gender equality, and the prevention and management of HIV and AIDS.

Finally, the SADC region fully supports the African Union road map for shared responsibility and global solidarity for AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria response in Africa. The road map stresses the need to promote and facilitate investing in local manufacturing hubs in Africa as one of the four priority actions to ensure access to medicines in the region. As a number of African companies are working tirelessly to obtain the World Health Organization's pre-qualifications, we urge the international community to support the loca manufacturing of medicines in every way in order to reduce the vulnerability of the continent.

Mr. Mamabolo (South Africa): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of African States.

Although HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria remain a global health challenge, with a substantial mortality burden in Africa, the African Union and its member States have taken significant measures to address the pandemic at various levels, including the adoption of the road map on shared responsibility and global solidarity for AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. The progress of the road map, which was adopted by African Heads of State and Government in 2012, is being assessed by the Action Committee of Heads of State and Government of AIDS Watch Africa. The road map calls on African Union members to strengthen ownership, accountability and partnership to accelerate progress to achieve clear deliverables under the three pillars of financing, access to medicines and enhanced governance in order to help countries build long-term and sustainable solutions.

Moreover, the African Union special summit in July 2013 in Abuja, Nigeria, made a strong commitment to the Abuja Action Plan towards the elimination of HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria in Africa by 2030, which called for accelerating antiretroviral treatment, eliminating the mother-to-child transmission of HIV, and strengthening preventive measures in order to reduce new HIV infection. Furthermore, the decision to allocate 15 per cent of the national budget of African States to the health sector is a clear demonstration of the strong political will in Africa.

The African Group takes note of the Secretary-General's report, entitled "Towards ending the AIDS epidemic: meeting the 2015 targets and planning for the post-2015 era" (A/68/825), and the recommendations contained therein. The Group believes that the report could contribute to discussions towards the formulation of the post-2015 United Nations development agenda. In addition, while the Group welcomes the convening of a high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS in 2016, the African Group underscores the importance of adhering to the intergovernmental principle in defining the modalities and organizational arrangements for the meeting at the seventieth session of the General Assembly.

The Secretary-General's report shows that the global HIV response has reached an important stage. New HIV infections and AIDs-related deaths continue to decline in sub-Saharan Africa. Despite continuing economic challenges and competing priorities, the total resources available for HIV programmes in low- and middle-income countries continue to grow. The Group also applauds and recognizes the joint efforts undertaken in 2013 by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, the World Health Organization (WHO), the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, and the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief to launch the Treatment 2015 initiative, which provides a road map for accelerating treatment scale-up, including in the three years beyond 2015. It urges States to focus attention on neglected aspects of the treatment agenda, including the urgent need to invest in strategies to increase demand for testing and treatment services. Treatment 2015 further calls for all countries to establish new treatment targets to reflect the 2013 WHO guidelines and to routinely monitor outcomes across the treatment cascades.

The African Group is, however, alarmed that the AIDS response is failing where young people are concerned. Children are only half as likely as adults to obtain antiretroviral therapy when needed. Given that AIDS-related deaths are declining overall, HIV-related mortality among adolescents has increased by 50 per cent since 2005. The African Group is convinced that the youth population represents a great asset. It recognizes that the viability of this resource depends on our capacity to take on this challenge. The Group reiterates that it is of the utmost importance to protect women, children and youth from the particular conditions that may impact on their well-being and livelihood. We are equally concerned that in sub-Saharan African, HIV infection rates remain substantially higher among girls than among boys of a similar age. The number of donor-funded male condoms in low- and middle-income countries dropped from 3.4 billion in 2011 to 2.4 billion in 2012, while the number of donor-provided female condoms fell from 43.4 million to 31.8 million.

Considering the mid-term reviews in 2013 of national progress behavioural HIV prevention programmes, the African Group reaffirms and reiterates that prevention, diagnosis, treatment, strong surveillance systems and universal access to service must be at the core of our efforts. In that regard, the issue of supply-chain management and local production of medicine and other preventive mechanisms must be given the critical attention they deserve.

The African Group underscores that universal access to HIV/AIDS treatment remains paramount to global response strategies and constitutes a fundamental human right. The Group reiterates the importance of respect for regional culture and religious value systems and peculiarities in considering human rights issues. The African Group is disturbed by the continuous use of certain concepts and terms in the Secretary-General's report. We wish to stress the need to maintain joint ownership of the international human rights agenda and to consider human rights issues in an objective and non-confrontational manner. It is the African Group's view that we should refrain from relying on notions that fall outside the internationally agreed human rights framework, taking into account that such attempts constitute an expression of disregard for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

According to the Secretary-General's report, the stigmatization and discrimination of people living with HIV/AIDS still prevail. The Group is particularly concerned that such attitudes continue to undermine an effective AIDS response to the extent that people living with HIV continue to face challenges in some countries, where they are denied health or dental care and employment. The African Group recognizes that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, and that the international community must treat human rights globally in a fair and equal manner on the same footing and with the same emphasis.

We remain steadfast in the view that, while the significance of national and regional pecularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds must be borne in mind, it is the duty of States — regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems — to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Group therefore strongly urges for people living with HIV/AIDS to be treated fairly and equally, and protected from stigma, discriminatory practices and related intolerance.

Inasmuch as there has been progress in reducing new HIV infections among people injecting drugs, the Group believes that more emphasis should be placed on efforts aimed at counselling and other means of encouraging people to refrain from using drugs in Africa. Drug use and abuse remain a critical legal matter.

In conclusion, the African Group reaffirms its commitment to fighting the HIV/AIDS scourge, and believes that international cooperation and strategic partnership are crucial in that fight. The Group similarly welcomes medical research developments and technological initiatives on the treatment and cure of HIV/AIDS that are of good quality, accessible and affordable to all. We strongly believe that the HIV treatment for 15 million people, a target set by the Secretary-General, will be achievable only if the significant gains made in HIV prevention and antiretroviral treatment are sustained, and if treatment to prevent mother-to-child transmission is strengthened. The Group therefore calls upon its partners to support the business plan for the implementation of the Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Plan for Africa, which was developed in collaboration with a broad range of partners and subsequently adopted by the special session of the fifth Conference of the African Ministers of Health, in May 2012.

The President: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Poulsen (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its member States.

First, we would like to welcome the Secretary-General's comprehensive report (A/68/825) on progress towards achieving the targets of the Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS (resolution 65/277, annex), adopted in 2011. We appreciate the review of the progress to date in reducing new HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths, increasing the prevention of mother-to-child transmission, and the major scientific advances in and large scale-up of access to antiretroviral treatment.

The report underlines that although several of the key targets and goals for 2015 are within reach, AIDS will remain an urgent global health and development challenge. Several significant remaining challenges are mentioned, such as the need for countries to invest strategically in evidence-based HIV prevention in an integrated and comprehensive way, which includes

addressing, among others, links between sexual and reproductive health rights and sexuality education; the importance of scaling up services for key populations and supporting human-rights-based initiatives that will strengthen access to such services; the continued discrimination against and stigmatization of those key populations and women and girls who are particularly vulnerable or most at risk for contracting HIV; the rise in new infections in certain regions and populations; the importance of eliminating HIV-related restrictions on and punitive approaches to those key populations, including people who inject drugs; and the need for better data. The European Union fully agrees with the challenges mentioned and the steps to be taken, especially regarding key populations.

At the country level, tailor-made responses are required to address the HIV epidemic. The report spells out clearly that it is time to integrate HIV prevention and treatment into regular health systems, ensuring that health care services are accessible to hard-to-reach and marginalized groups. It may therefore be unhelpful to recommend establishing national trust funds and mandatory earmarks in budgets only to fund HIV. We welcome the increased efforts of low- and middle-income countries to reduce their dependence on international funding. However, much remains to be done, and we encourage all countries to continue on this path. In that regard, we would like to remind Governments to significantly and speedily scale up their efforts to accelerate the transition to universal access to affordable and quality health-care services.

We acknowledge the work and leadership of Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) as the Organization's focal point in the fight against the HIV epidemic. Collaboration between all relevant actors, including people living with HIV, civil society — both as a service provider and a watchdog — and the Global Fund, especially at the country level, remains of crucial importance. While the Global Fund was not conceived as a long-term financing instrument, we acknowledge that for the foreseeable future it remains crucially important in the fight against HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, and we therefore encourage a continued close working relationship between it and UNAIDS.

The European Union and its member States look forward to the high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS in 2016 or soon thereafter, as part of a broader strategic effort to reaffirm and renew our political commitments and to ensure accountability in efforts to achieve universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support in the post-2015 era.

Mr. Tin (Myanmar): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 10 States members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN): Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam and my own country, Myanmar.

At the outset, ASEAN wishes to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report on the important issue of HIV/AIDS (A/68/825). ASEAN also strongly supports the call by the ministers of the Non-Aligned Movement at its seventeenth Ministerial Conference, held recently in Algiers, for a scaling-up of their efforts to achieve the goals of universal access to comprehensive prevention programmes, treatment, care and support and of halting and reversing the spread of this pandemic by 2015.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic remains an issue of critical concern to all peoples all over the world, since to varying degrees it affects every region, including that of ASEAN. It has the potential to be a formidable challenge to and constraint on member States' economic and social development efforts, and curbing it requires a concerted response. ASEAN therefore shares other major regional groups' concerns about the the pandemic's prevalence. Reducing the HIV/AIDS death toll is one of the ASEAN countries' major joint responsibilities.

The leaders of ASEAN have shown their readiness to forge a global partnership by making ASEAN's own political commitments to responding to HIV/AIDS in the wake of the General Assembly's adoption in 2001 of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS (resolution S-26/2, annex) and the subsequent Political Declarations of 2006 (resolution 60/262, annex) and 2011 (resolution 65/277, annex). The first ASEAN Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS was made in 2001 at its seventh Summit in Brunei Darussalam, and ASEAN's leaders again adopted a declaration of commitment to zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths during the nineteenth ASEAN Summit in Bali, Indonesia, in 2011. In preparation for the Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on HIV/AIDS scheduled for 28-30 January 2015 in Bangkok, ASEAN is also taking steps to evaluate the outcomes of national reviews of its members' policy and legal barriers to universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support.

ASEAN put in place a mechanism to address HIV and AIDS by establishing the ASEAN Task Force on AIDS in 1993. Since then, the Task Force has provided a focus for a coordinated regional response to HIV. It has already completed three work programmes, and has been implementing a fourth for 2011-2015. One of the Task Force's achievements was the development in 2011 of a first regional report on HIV, which documented the status of the HIV pandemic in ASEAN member countries as well as the Association's efforts to address the issue. The report indicated that the main drivers of the epidemic in ASEAN were unprotected sex with multiple partners and needle-sharing in injecting drug use. About 75 per cent of all HIV infections in ASEAN countries are reported from among the key affected populations of sex workers, men who have sex with men, transgender individuals and those who inject drugs. Other vulnerable populations include the intimate partners of the latter groups and at-risk young people, institutionalized persons, the military and mobile populations. The Task Force's initiatives include supporting ASEAN member States in reaching key affected populations by hosting and funding regional-level meetings and consultations, which have included consultations on at-risk youth and on greater involvement and empowerment of people living with HIV.

Many ASEAN countries have already reached their targets in treatment coverage. Nevertheless, most Member States remain dependent on international assistance. For that reason, the ASEAN Task Force supports the fast-tracking of accreditation for licensing in ASEAN member States to produce affordable generic antiretroviral drugs for HIV. An important remaining challenge is developing an enabling a policy environment for HIV programme response. Conflicting laws and policies still exist, particularly for HIV prevention among people who inject drugs, sex workers and homosexual people. In order to get the private sector involved, ASEAN has established the ASEAN Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS and the ASEAN Red Ribbon for Outstanding Workplace Awards for ASEAN senior labour officials as a platform for promoting the greater participation of the private sector in HIV prevention and control and non-discrimination in the workplace.

We are now intensifying our efforts towards building the ASEAN community by 2015. One of the key pillars in that community-building is the ASEAN sociocultural blueprint, which identifies HIV/AIDS as one of the listed priorities. To achieve the goal of a world with zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths, ASEAN needs to forge closer ties with multilateral, bilateral and other international organizations. At present, we are actively engaged with the United Nations family, including the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and the United Nations Development Programme, as well as other donor agencies. Those dialogues and partnerships need to be pursued more strategically, with energy, vigour and passion. Although some ASEAN countries have already reached their universal access targets, we in ASEAN still require further collaboration and financial and technical support. Our vision is an ASEAN community that is people-centred, socially responsible, inclusive and harmonious, with enduring solidarity and unity. We aim to forge a common identity and build a community of caring societies, where the well-being, livelihood and welfare of all peoples are enhanced.

Recognizing the importance of health care for the people, ASEAN leaders, at their recent summit in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, emphasized the need for the effective implementation of the Bandar Seri Begawan Declaration on Non-Communicable Diseases and welcomed ongoing activities in addressing the epidemic. Through the effective implementation of the ongoing ASEAN Work Programme for HIV/AIDS, and with enhanced international assistance, we believe that ASEAN will be able to scale up its efforts to achieve the goal of universal access to comprehensive prevention programmes, treatment, care and support.

Ms. Auguste (Haiti) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to commend you, Mr. President, for having organized this debate. I am pleased and honoured to participate in this event of great importance to the future of our planet. It is a genuine privilege to come to the General Assembly Hall to make the Haitian nation's contribution to the construction of a new world through the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) — a world of peace, without extreme poverty and without HIV/AIDS. Allow me to commend and thank the Secretary-General for his high-quality report (A/68/825) and for his statement.

My delegation endorses the statement made by the representative of Trinidad and Tobago on behalf of the Caribbean Community.

Nearly 15 years ago, the world joined forces as never before to address the many evils that afflict developing countries and together to define the ways

and means to reduce the suffering and injustices that afflict approximately 1.2 billion people around the world living below the threshold of extreme poverty and to eliminate the scourge of HIV, which further compounds their misery. We are less than two years before the date fixed by the United Nations for the achievement of the MDGs to ensure the advent of a more humane, happier world.

It is with satisfaction and optimism that we look to the future. During the past 14 years, various indicators linked to extreme poverty and HIV have declined globally. At the regional level, since the Pan-Caribbean Partnership against HIV/AIDS was established in 2001, we have recorded a decrease in the incidence of HIV and deaths linked to AIDS by 49 per cent and 59 per cent, respectively. In 2001, 24,000 people died of AIDS. In 2012, only 11,000 died and the use of antiretroviral treatment had risen by 67 per cent. In 2001, such coverage was only 5 per cent.

For some countries, several of the Millennium Development Goals will not be achieved, but the trends are positive and the process is off to a good start. The results attained so far suggest that extreme poverty will be overcome, because the world has come to see that with goodwill and by devoting the resources necessary, we can defeat this scourge and assure all inhabitants of the planet a world of greater well-being and justice. However, those goals must not be interpreted as an opportunity to rest on our laurels. The most important work remains to be done, and we have a long and arduous road ahead. We need to define together the ways and means to reduce the suffering and injustices of people around the world who live below the threshold of extreme poverty and to eliminate the scourge of HIV/AIDS that compounds their misery.

That will not be easy, especially as regards HIV. The progress we are talking about is not across the board, and many countries still lag behind. More than ever, we must redouble our passion and solidarity. Victory over extreme poverty and HIV/AIDS can be achieved only through collective action guided by a sense of fraternity. As the deadline approaches, Haiti wishes to reaffirm the commitment it undertook nearly 15 years ago to joining the global effort to create a more just world in which the dignity of all citizens, no matter where they live, will at last be upheld.

We are proud of the progress made in recent years, especially during the three years that our Government has had the privilege of being in power. Despite all the difficulties that we have had to overcome following various natural disasters and other social and political handicaps, we have stayed the course. Our experience, which we are happy to share with the Assembly, have confirmed that our strategy to prioritize the fight against extreme poverty is the right one. As a result of victories over extreme poverty, we can now instil confidence in the future among the suffering majority and motivate them to achieve their own well-being and that of the nation.

For some countries, victory over HIV appears particularly difficult because it requires the eradication of extreme poverty, since poverty and HIV are linked. It is no coincidence that the poorest countries and communities are those where the rate of HIV infection is the highest. It is no coincidence, either, that AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis are called the infectious diseases of poverty, because they disproportionately affect poor and marginalized populations and are major drivers of extreme poverty and social exclusion.

The link between AIDS and development is indisputable. We must be more aggressive. We must break down barriers, inequality and exclusion and address all causes that perpetuate poverty, since the economic vulnerability that it creates promotes a number of risk behaviours. Such vulnerability must therefore be addressed by using all available means. That is what we have done under the Martelly Administration and Lamothe Government with our social programmes to identify all aspects of extreme poverty, overcoming them with appropriate solutions.

That is why any strategy reviewing the actions to take and the means to use after 2015 in order to achieve that better world for which we struggle must prioritize the fight against extreme poverty, since we must promote any solution that addresses such vulnerability, as we have done with our social assistance programmes and cash transfers in Haiti. Although it was initially criticized, that approach allowed us to improve the outcomes for some key indicators of the Millennium Development Goals.

Three years before the deadline, eliminating underweight among children under 5 years old has been achieved thanks to our determined social policy. Seom 88 per cent of Haitian children now go to school. Our great successes can in particular be seen in the drastic drop in infant and child mortality and in the HIV and AIDS prevalence, which we have managed to stabilize at 2.2 per cent since 2006. It should also be underscored

that such welcome developments could not have been achieved without the solidarity and assistance of the international community and the dedication of the relevant United Nations bodies.

The world will not ever be sufficiently united to deal with all the disasters that afflict it. We need that solidarity more than ever, since the challenges that we must overcome are huge. Six million of our brothers still live in poverty. We have the highest unemployment rate in the hemisphere. While undeniable progress has been made, our health-care system still has serious shortcomings. Considerable efforts should be made to restore our environment, which is the most damaged in the region, in particular since climate change has a serious impact on that deterioration.

However, we are not worried. We have already charted the path that will enable us to achieve all our goals and the post-2015 period is no longer a cause of concern for us. The seeds that we sowed through the implementation of our social programmes, our projects and, in particular, our action plan to reduce poverty have begun to yield results, showing all Haitian citizens the possibility of that lawful, happy and prosperous society of which they have long dreamed. That will give rise to the momentum to overcome all impediments and make it possible to deal with all the challenges, in particular HIV. We now know that it is essential to choose the right path and to move forward time and again in order to succeed. Clearly, we will probably not achieve several goals on time, but it is key to succeed and we will do so.

At the strategic level, we know that we must do our utmost to achieve the set goals by the 2015 deadline or, at least, get as close as we can in order to encourage all international actors to step up their efforts to continue the fight against poverty and AIDS beyond 2015. In that regard, we must urgently find the funds to strengthen prevention campaigns for young people between 15 and 24 years old and women, who are the most affected by the scourge of AIDS. Women account for approximately 57 per cent of the cases recorded between 2010 and 2015. Pharmaceutical companies must also join the global effort and agree to slightly lower their profit so that the price of antiretroviral treatment is more affordable and poor people have access to those medicines.

I would like to tell all sister nations — in particular those that, like us, face difficulties and are overwhelmed by thousands of problems — that the worst is behind us, since we know that if we stay united and mobilized, as we have over the past 14 years, we will achieve our goals, even if not all of them by the set date. The key is to move forward. Victory lies ahead. In order to stay the course, we propose the following actions.

We must speed up decentralization processes so that citizens in the most remote parts of the world can benefit from the same services as those in the major countries. We must emphasize prevention programmes, since people tend to give up once progress has been made in the fight against HIV. They tend to think that the disease has become less dangerous. That is not at all true. We must remind them of that by means of massive and aggressive campaigns, aimed in particular at young people and women. We should subsidize, wherever possible, antiretroviral drugs for those who are not able to pay for them. We must make people aware that the problem of HIV, just like hunger or extreme poverty, in short comes down to one problem: that of development. Development is a common effort. The involvement of every citizen is both a moral and a patriotic duty.

It is especially necessary for each member of the international community, every citizen of every country, to consider their responsibility in what is a true shame for humanity. It is inconceivable that millions of people live in the most extreme poverty and die of hunger, malaria and other diseases, while humanity has all that is needed to eradicate such scourges. For all these years, we members of the international community have been too indulgent towards ourselves. We have accepted too many failures that were avoidable. That is the crux of the issue. Above all, we must continue the strong will to put an end to the phenomenon, which should never have existed, and maintain a healthy indignation for the horrors that for too long we were happy to merely watch. In that way we will remain mobilized and continue on the path that we, as members of the international community, have set for ourselves until the total elimination of poverty and HIV and AIDS.

Mr. Sinhaseni (Thailand), Vice-President, took the Chair.

However, we are not concerned about Haiti. Our results may seem rather modest to the casual observer. That is only because we are in the middle of a democratic learning process that is not very easy and our policy is not always well understood. The Martelly Administration and Lamothe Government have, however, adopted the preferential option for the poor as the social vision that guides our governance. We are in the process of writing that page of history. The uninformed observer clearly lacks the perspective to appreciate the fairness

and scope of such an option, which we are not afraid to call life-saving not only for poor people but for all society. We must therefore understand the essence of the option, study it, perfect it and promote it among ourselves so that it can reappear and regain the prestige that it enjoyed following 1 January 1804.

Mrs. Bartoli (France) (*spoke in French*): We thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/68/825), which, as 2015 approaches, underscores all the efforts made to date throughout the world to combat HIV and AIDS and the progress still to be made in the hope of achieving the fundamental goal of a world without AIDS.

France has been strongly committed to combatting AIDS since the virus was identified 31 years ago. Today, we are the second-largest contributor to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, and the largest to the International Drug Purchase Facility, the key organization we played a major role in creating. We therefore welcome the progress that has been made, welcome the mobilization of the international community as a whole in its efforts to combat the pandemic, and reaffirm today the international commitment of France, which allocates more than €300 million — almost $500 million — to combatting AIDS. That massive investment is geared primarily to providing innovative financing for health, such as the solidarity tax on airplane tickets and the tax on financial transactions. Scientific advances, such as the latest recommendations of the World Health Organization (WHO) concerning the early treatment of patients, allow us to foresee a decline in the epidemic that was seen as inconceivable just a few years ago.

The key moment of 2015 for global health will provide us both an opportunity to assess the ground we have covered and to reflect on the ways we propose to shape the fight against AIDS in the post-2015 world. In that context, France underscores three subjects that are dear to our heart.

First, we need to continue to implement policies to combat AIDS that are founded on respect for human rights. The Secretary-General's report exposes the persistent stigmatization, repression and criminalization of vulnerable people — in particular injectable drug users, a population that has unfortunately experienced a spike in the disease in some regions of the world — when they seek access to health care.

Secondly, greater attention should be paid to prevention and treatment for young people, particularly adolescents. The WHO publication on adolescent health published in March notes that HIV/AIDS is the second cause of adolescent death. That is proof, were it needed, that the fight against HIV/AIDS cannot be allowed a moment's pause.

Lastly, the end of the AIDS epidemic can be foreseen only if we devote greater attention to strengthening health systems and to ensuring non-discrimination, with the goal of achieving universal health care. A world without AIDS can become a reality only if the fight against HIV/AIDs is fully integrated into robust national health systems that allow us to address interrelated challenges in the fundamental areas of co-infection, sexual and reproductive health, maternal and child health, and risk reduction among the most vulnerable groups.

France therefore calls for maintaining the political and financial mobilization to combat HIV/AIDS and strengthening efforts within national health systems in order to meet the goal set by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS: zero new infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths.

Mr. Quinlan (Australia): I would like to acknowledge from the very beginning the leadership of Michel Sidibé and all his dedicated colleagues at the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), who are very instrumental to all our efforts.

I had the great honour to work with my colleague Ambassador Charles Ntwaagae of Botswana as co-chair of the negotiations of the 2011 Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS (resolution 65/277, annex). We are now 12 months from the deadline we ourselves all set for the ambitious targets for a world free of AIDS, but the challenges facing us are still very stark. The recommendations in the Secretary General's report (A/68/825) reflect the action we need to take to deliver on the promise and commitment of the Declaration. The report speaks about the need to use lessons and evidence of what works to scale up all our efforts and build on our successes.

With that in mind, I am frankly alarmed to see that the distribution of condoms declined by over a billion between 2011 and 2012, and that the number of AIDS-related deaths for adolescents actually increased. That is a damning indication that we are not doing what we know works. We need to ensure that HIV and AIDS programmes are targeted to and appropriate for young people. Australia is particularly committed to expanding

access to comprehensive sexuality education, including for adolescents. Fifty adolescent girls contract HIV each hour. That means that 150 will contract HIV during our meeting this morning. It is unforgivably irresponsible not to provide access to HIV prevention programmes for young people.

The report speaks of the need to focus on geographic settings and populations where HIV prevalence and incidence are highest. That has particular resonance for Australia and our Indo-Pacific region. Decades ago, Australia put key populations at the centre of our response. We initiated needle and syringe exchanges and community-based outreach programmes for sex workers and gay men, and we tackled discrimination against people with HIV, with their help. Those interventions helped reduce and avoid new infections well before the new advances in treatment.

Research shows that the pattern of the epidemic's spread in Asia is driven by commercial sex, injecting drug use and sex between men. In Australia's closest neighbour, Papua New Guinea, HIV infection rates in transgender people and sex workers are many times higher than in the general population. The high rates of infection in those key populations denote high levels of risk and demand targeted interventions.Australia is working with our partners in the region to support their efforts to reduce and avoid new infections. For example, our partnerships with Indonesia and Papua New Guinea support national responses and target at-risk populations. Targeting services to those most at risk also makes sense economically. The Commission on AIDS in Asia has found that interventions for key populations are low in cost and high in impact.

Perhaps most importantly, the Secretary General's report speaks of the need to protect the human rights of key populations, particularly lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Punitive laws that criminalize those people and/or restrict their freedoms of association and expression violate the most fundamental human rights that underpin the Charter of the United Nations itself and that we all obligated to uphold. The evidence shows that such laws limit access to services and put lives at risk. We need policies of inclusion that reduce stigma and discrimination against people with HIV and against socially marginalized and vulnerable groups, sex workers, transgender people, people who use drugs and men who have sex with men. Australia is strongly committed to reaching out to and supporting vulnerable populations and to defending their human rights.

This year, Australia has the honour of chairing the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board in Geneva and will host the twentieth International AIDS Conference in Melbourne next month. We relish this leadership role and are committed to making the international conference a compelling, inspiring and informative event for all. Finally, we look forward to the high-level meeting on HIV and AIDS anticipated for 2016, which is a necessary meeting.

To conclude, we know what we need to do to end HIV and AIDS. Our Political Declaration in 2011 set out a straight trajectory to achieve this, and our momentum has picked up. But we need to do so much more. Above all, we must do what we already know works.

Mr. Shearman (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (A/68/825) on progress towards achieving the commitments set out in the 2011 Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS (resolution 65/277, annex). The report highlights the important progress we have made globally in tackling HIV. New HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths continue to decline, and the provision of antiretrovirals means individuals can extend and improve their quality of life. However, as the report clearly outlines, we can in no way afford to be complacent. We know that progress has been uneven, both across the world and within populations.

In particular, the report outlines the significantly increased risk of HIV within populations such as transgender people, people who inject drugs, prisoners, sex workers and men who have sex with men. As the report outlines, health status is powerfully affected by inequality, marginalization and discrimination. We therefore welcome the recommendation for equitable and non-discriminatory access to HIV treatment, including gathering data in a manner that fully respects human rights, in order to close gaps. The United Kingdom also strongly supports the recommendation to replace punitive laws and law enforcement with protective laws as an important element in reducing stigma and halting the rise in HIV infections.

The report also highlights how women and girls are disproportionately affected by HIV. The prevalence of gender-based violence continues to increase the risk of HIV infection. In a conflict or crisis, girls and women are more vulnerable to rape and transactional sex. The highest maternal mortality and worst reproductive health are in countries experiencing crisis. Contraception,

prevention and treatment of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections and safe abortion are life-saving services, yet they are often ignored in humanitarian responses. To help address that, the United Kingdom is supporting the development of a new programme on sexual and reproductive health in crisis and emergency response and recovery, which includes services to reduce the transmission of HIV.

The United Kingdom is a committed partner in the global HIV response. We have increased our annual contribution to the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) by 50 per cent. At the end of last year, we pledged £1 billion, or nearly $2 billion, to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, and we continue to call on other donors over the 2014-2016 period to reach the $15-billion target for the Global Fund. For the global response to be lasting, we must not only integrate HIV within other sectors, but also leverage sustainable financing and increase domestic funding and investments.

We recognize that a strong health system is an important way to improve the reach, efficiency and resilience of services. We therefore support the recommendation of the report for a further integration of HIV within the wider health system. By integrating HIV services within tuberculosis services, sexual and reproductive health services and the wider health system, people living with and affected by HIV, including children and people with disabilities, are treated holistically.

In closing, we agree that community engagement and quality information and education is a vital part of the HIV response and of finishing the job on existing commitments, including Millennium Development Goal 6. It is only through addressing stigma, increasing information and understanding, committing domestic and international resources and supporting a high level of integration of HIV services within the health system that we can truly achieve zero new infections in our lifetime.

Mr. Golitsyn (Ukraine): Ukraine welcomes the report of the Secretary-General (A/68/825), entitled "Towards ending the AIDS epidemic: meeting the 2015 targets and planning for the post-2015 era". We recognize the remarkable work of the Secretariat, national delegations and civil society, which made this document as strong as it could be.

We share the view that the international community, in the past 30 years of addressing the problem, has achieved notable progress in the global AIDS response. However, the AIDS epidemic is far from over. Therefore, Ukraine notes with satisfaction that, despite economic challenges, the total resources available for HIV programmes in low- and middle-income countries continue to grow. It is crucial to sustain the current level of cooperation with all partners, including both international and domestic donor organizations; the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS; the World Health Organization; the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria; the United Nations Development Programme; and the United Nations Population Fund.

It has been three years since the adoption of the Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS (resolution 65/277, annex), and this plenary meeting provides us an opportunity to review our achievements. We would like to emphasize that the implementation of preventive measures, including the introduction of substitution therapy among the affected population represented by injecting drug users, has had a decisive impact on addressing HIV in Ukraine. According to an epidemiological survey, from 2006 to 2013 there was a gradual decrease of newly reported HIV cases in Ukraine among injecting drug users, and in 2012, for the first time, HIV infections decreased by 1.6 per cent compared to previous years. The country is also observing a strong positive trend in the decrease in the proportion of new HIV infections among young people, which has dropped by a factor of 1.8. Ukraine has achieved a significant decrease in mother-to-child HIV transmission, which has decreased sevenfold over the past decade.

Those results were made possible thanks to close cooperation between non-governmental and public organizations. The introduction of an integrated approach to dealing with the different groups made our HIV response more effective. That approach includes, in addition to purely medical interventions, components of social support, harm reduction programmes and substitution therapy.

Ukraine takes every opportunity to minimize HIV-related risks and tackle AIDS-related deaths. Therefore, the Ukrainian Government is seeking to decentralize the antiretroviral treatment process, offering medical assistance at the secondary level and providing, as a

first support package, HIV prevention services and support to people living with the infection.

Ukraine and several other countries are studying various options to mobilize sustainable financing, such as national HIV trust funds. However, almost 41 per cent of our HIV treatment is covered by international assistance mechanisms such as the Global Fund. In order to address new realities and shore up the efforts of the Government, international actors and non-governmental organizations, Ukraine has adopted a nationwide targeted social programme for combating HIV/AIDS for 2014-2018. The relevant legislation is being constantly updated in order to correspond to international medical and technical standards.

Given this opportunity to address the Assembly, we would like to raise awareness regarding recent developments. We know that the recent unjustified events in Crimea will directly affect the HIV/AIDS situation on the peninsula. The Ministry of Health of Ukraine and related non-governmental organizations are seriously concerned about the de facto total ban on harm-reduction packages and the abolishing of the opiate substitution treatment provided by Ukraine in Crimea. In that regard, we are ready to announce that the Ukraine's State service on social diseases has established an expert task group to address this issue, which undermines the human rights of Ukrainian citizens and may have humanitarian consequences with lethal effects. As of today, 18 regions of Ukraine are able to provide 416 additional courses of substitution therapy for patients from the autonomous Republic of Crimea.

To conclude, my country believes that further discussion of HIV-related issues at the General Assembly will contribute to national and global progress towards achieving the relevant Millennium Development Goals and strengthen our common efforts on formulating HIV-related targets within the United Nations post-2015 agenda.

Mr. Takahashi (Japan): My delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (A/68/825). My delegation would also like to thank the President of the General Assembly for giving us an opportunity to have a discussion on this agenda item with other Member States.

There are less than 600 days left to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Since the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS (resolution 65/277, annex) was adopted three years ago, steady progress has been made globally on several of its core goals, which include reducing sexually transmitted HIV, eliminating HIV infections among newborns and infants and reducing maternal deaths. However, the goal of universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS by 2010 has not been achieved, and there remain other challenges, such as the continued growth of the epidemic in several countries, including 16 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, and the continued lack of access to treatment for many children.

Discussions on the future sustainable development goals and the Post-2015 Development Agenda are ongoing at present, and there is no doubt that the fight against HIV/AIDS will remain a struggle that we must continue to contend with even after 2015. In his report, the Secretary-General described the many important synergies between the responses to HIV/AIDS on the one hand and global efforts to eliminate extreme poverty, ensure universal health coverage and reduce inequalities on the other. My delegation agrees entirely on that point.

In order to accelerate and enhance our efforts towards HIV/AIDS prevention, diagnosis, treatment and health management, it is necessary to implement comprehensive measures focusing not just on HIV/AIDS itself but on the entire health system. Under Japan's national health programme, we have established an effective health and medical system by locating health-care facilities nationwide and cultivating medical specialists such as doctors, nurses and pharmacists. We have implemented universal medical care insurance in order to enable everyone to access sufficient services, and we have strengthened our measures dealing with HIV/AIDS in addition to our basic health and medical systems. Through the aforementioned efforts, all people in Japan living with HIV have access to the necessary health-care services as part of universal health coverage.

Next, my delegation would like to speak briefly about the issue of equity in the fight against HIV/AIDS. The lack of equitable access to life-saving HIV treatment, especially for women and children, needs to be dealt with. The concept of human security provides a comprehensive approach that strengthens the protection and empowerment of people and communities in need. In that regard, Japan expects United Nations entities and Member States to draw on that approach on the ground to fight HIV/AIDS.

Prejudice and discrimination against people living with HIV continue to exist, and that stigma has been an obstacle in the path of our fight against HIV/AIDS. It is necessary for us to make every effort to eliminate prejudice and discrimination against those living with HIV through a people-centred approach to human security. To that end, my country contributed $1.86 billion by the end of 2013 to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria for supporting the HIV/AIDS response. Moreover, at the fourth voluntary replenishment conference of the Global Fund, held in December 2013, Japan announced that it would contribute an additional $800 million to the Fund in the coming years, starting in 2014.

Furthermore, at the fifth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD V), which was held in Japan in 2013, the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS were highlighted as an important sector-specific agenda in Japan's assistance policy, and we are moving it forward in order to steadily implement the Yokohama Action Plan 2013-2017, which elaborates on the follow-up to the outcome of TICAD V.

Japan believes that through realizing universal health coverage and human security we can achieve societies and communities where all people have full access to prevention, diagnosis, treatment and health-care services for HIV/AIDS, where new HIV infections cease and where we can live with the people living with HIV without prejudice or discrimination.

Finally, I would like to inform the Assembly that an event on universal health coverage, co-organized by the Governments of Japan, France and Thailand together with the World Health Organization and the World Bank Group, will be held at the Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations, beginning at 8.15 a.m. on 11 June. We hope that as many Member States as possible will participate in that event and will learn that universal health coverage is achievable in all countries. We also hope that we can discuss the importance of promoting universal health coverage, particularly within the discussions on both the sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda.

Mr. Maksimychev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation is firmly committed to the purposes and principles of the 2011 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS (resolution 65/277, annex), which we see as a key framework for expanding international cooperation to combat the immunodeficiency virus.

Russia is one of the countries that, over the past few decades, has undertaken significant efforts to counteract HIV infections, and that has helped to effectively curb the development of the epidemic and its spread. Russian national legislation guarantees all citizens access to wide-ranging prevention programmes and free and voluntary testing, and HIV-infected persons have access to free high-quality medical assistance and social protection. Today, the annual coverage rate for voluntary HIV testing, primarily for risk groups, stands at 18 per cent of our population. That is one of the highest rates in the world. Over 30 per cent of people under observation receive antiretroviral therapy. That indicator is set to increase in the near future. The vertical transmission of HIV has almost stopped, and we are ready to share our successful experience of this work with all interested countries.

We are committed to implementing the World Health Organization strategy of treatment as prevention. We consider it important to coordinate the efforts of the entire international community to reduce the cost of anti-retroviral drugs. HIV prevalence in the Russian population is slightly over 0.4 per cent, which contradicts the forecasts of international experts about a widespread epidemic. Of course, much still remains to be done. Russia consistently and actively contributes to combatting the spread of HIV/AIDs and other infectious diseases throughout the world. In that task, we seek to combine participation in international mechanisms with the provision of bilateral assistance. In particular, Russia's contribution to replenishing resources to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria totals over $300 million. In 2013, through the United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), Russian-funded programmes to provide assistance to a number of Eastern European and Central Asian countries in the fight against the disease began to be implemented. In May, jointly with UNAIDS, Moscow held the fourth Conference on HIV/AIDS in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the outcome of which was a plan of action laying out commitments for partner countries, donor countries, international organizations and civil society bodies in order to achieve the main goals of the United Nations strategy to combat HIV/AIDS: zero new cases of HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths.

Our experience of cooperation within the Commonwealth of Independent States shows that cooperation at the regional and subregional levels, where the spread of infectious disease has similar characteristics, plays an important role in combatting the epidemic. In that context, Russia is expanding its technical, financial and organizational assistance to countries of the region in their efforts in that area. Combatting the spread of infectious diseases, including HIV infection, will remain a focus of Russian international development assistance, as enshrined in the concept of State policy for international development assistance, approved by Russian Federation President Putin on 20 April.

It is well known that one of the main reasons for the spread of HIV, including in Russia, is the use of injected drugs. In that context, determining the best strategy for working with that patient group remains a pressing issue. We are convinced that a genuinely scientific approach to the prevention and treatment of drug addiction is incompatible with any kind of legalization of narcotics. Medication and social assistance provided for drug addiction must strictly comply with the three basic United Nations anti-narcotic conventions. In that regard, we continue to pay particular attention to the issue of rehabilitating drug addicts. Patients are offered a range of globally available medicines.

Given the fact that concerns have been raised in this Hall today about the situation in Crimea with regard to persons who have received replacement therapy, I wish to report that all citizens of the Russian Federation are legally guaranteed full access to comprehensive services and social assistance for HIV and that we fully protect the rights of those infected. Of course, that also applies to residents of Crimea. We are effectively implementing national legislation on a series of measures to combat HIV/AIDS, including treatment for drug addiction throughout the country's territory. To provide medical assistance to drug addicts in the Crimea, we believe it necessary to take the particular features of the treatment they have already received into account, and we are guided primarily by their interests and health. Their treatment must continue to use state-of-the-art technology and within the framework of Russian-approved standards for medical assistance.

Finally, drug users residing in the Crimea may, upon their request, receive treatment with methadone and buprenorphine throughout that territory. Nobody is restricting their rights to those medications. At the same time, a tiny number of people — only 39 — are is currently availing themselves of that opportunity. In fact, with respect to medical assistance in the Crimea and other subjects of the Russian Federation, including Moscow and Saint-Petersburg, 450 people who had earlier received methadone therapy are currently receiving addiction assistance. There has been a significant increase in the Crimea with respect to the provision of drugs for the rehabilitation of patients who earlier had used replacement therapy. An individual road map provides for their treatment and their return to society.

Mr. Patriota (Brazil): I would like to commend the report presented by the Secretary-General, entitled "Towards ending the AIDS epidemic: meeting the 2015 targets and planning for the post-2015 era" (A/68/825). As the Secretary-General stresses in his report, the advances observed in the past 30 years are impressive. The number of new HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths globally continues to decline, with unprecedented reductions in the number of children newly infected with HIV. Much has already been accomplished and deserves to be acknowledged due to the ongoing multilateral effort.

Notwithstanding the tangible progress made, however, the international community needs to remain vigilant and not lose focus because of the positive results achieved so far. Progress may sometimes invite indulgence and represent an obstacle to the progress to be made ahead. So it is high time to redouble our efforts. In that connection, my delegation fully subscribes to the Secretary-General's recommendations for strengthened joint actions on the part of countries, civil society, international donors, the United Nations system and other key partners as we approach the deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals and the review of the 2011 Political Declaration on HIV and ADS (resolution 65/277, annex).

Brazil strongly supports the convening of a high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS as an adequate answer to the need to step up our efforts to meet one of the greatest challenges in global health care. Renewing our political commitment to fighting HIV/AIDS is the best way to celebrate the progress already made. The political momentum to be provided by a high-level meeting in 2016 will be, in our view, an adequate response to the call by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), at its thirty-third Programme Coordinating Board meeting last December, for broader strategic

effort to reaffirm and renew political commitments, and to ensure accountability with regard to the achievement of universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support in the post-2015 era.

We are convinced that a high-level meeting in 2016 will raise awareness and draw international attention to the full spectrum of issues related to HIV AIDS at a crucial juncture, subsequent to the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda. Political mobilization at the highest level will be necessary to carry out the work we started three decades ago and to continue to preserve the lives of millions living with HIV, halt new infections and inspire us to work towards ending new HIV infections.

Brazil believes that the task of eliminating HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths can be achieved in any region. Unfortunately, pockets of the epidemic — such as the spread of HIV/AIDS in conflict and post-conflict situations, among others — are still not being properly addressed. Moreover, I cannot overstress the disturbing implications arising from the adoption of national laws against homosexuality. Not only does it encourage prejudice and violence against minorities, but it also prevents lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people from accessing proper prevention methods or treatment. Laws against homosexuality will result in an increase, not in a reduction, of the contagion.

Governments of high-prevalence epidemic countries need to adequately focus on the needs of populations that are at higher risk of infection. Discrimination and limited access to health services will make these affected populations disproportionately vulnerable to the infection. We must make use of all internationally recognized best practices in order to eliminate the HIV/AIDS epidemic, including through special attention to marginalized groups and ensuring that they have access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support. We put in place the necessary tools to eliminate the HIV/AIDS epidemic, but the final push is important to guarantee that prevention, treatment, care and support are available to all.

Mindful of the importance of including marginalized, vulnerable and disadvantaged populations, we Member States agreed at the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women to ensure universal access to comprehensive prevention, affordable treatment, care and support services for HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections, free of stigma and discrimination and with a gender perspective, and to provide comprehensive information, voluntary counselling and testing to young women and adolescent girls living with and affected by HIV and AIDS.

The positive results of the Brazilian policy to fight HIV/AIDS is based on that type of universal approach with no discrimination of any kind. Our achievements in the battle also demonstrates that the fight against HIV/AIDS includes the struggle to overcome financial challenges and limitations. The imperatives of public health must prevail over commercial interests; ensuring the affordability of drugs, at fair prices and in accordance with the economic situation of different countries, constitutes one of the key pillars of that policy.

The full implementation of the flexibility allowed by the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), as agreed upon in the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health and the World Health Organization Global Strategy and Plan of Action on Public Health, Innovation and Intellectual Property, is a powerful and effective instrument to accomplish the targets of universal access, especially with respect to the most vulnerable groups. Brazil reaffirms its support to horizontal cooperation that enables developing countries, particularly low-income countries, to benefit from TRIPS flexibility.

I am proud to share some characteristics of our strategy to deal with HIV/AIDS challenges. The Brazilian national health system guarantees access to medication and all necessary diagnostic tests for all people resident in Brazil. Everyone's privacy is guaranteed by the Constitution. No one — not even health professionals — may reveal that another person has HIV/AIDS without prior authorization. Companies may no longer oblige people to test for HIV when they start a new job. No employer may dismiss an employee just because he has HIV. Dismissal owing to discrimination can lead to legal proceedings so that employees get their jobs back. In addition, if dismissal involves humiliation of any kind, the employee in question can claim compensation for damages.

Anyone who has AIDS, becomes unable to work and whose per capita income is less than one-fourth of the minimum wage has a right to a continuous social security benefit paid by the federal Government.

People with chronic diseases, including AIDS, are exempt from paying income tax on retirement pensions and validity allowances for accidents at work and pensions. In the event of suffering discrimination, the Brazilian Government recommends that the citizen file a complaint at a police station or seek support from a citizens' legal advice bureau or other legal aid organization.

The fight against HIV/AIDS in Brazil includes special attention to young people. Young Brazilians benefit from national programmes, such as health and prevention in schools, a partnership between the ministries of education and health and United Nations agencies and funds, such as UNESCO, UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund. The programme has enabled the expansion of the discussion on sexual and reproductive health and involved the whole school community — students, parents and teachers. Today in Brazil, approximately 10,000 public schools distribute condoms in a programme associated with educational activities. The goal of the Brazilian Government is to ensure universal access to information and prevention materials to ensure that the young make informed decisions.

I cannot conclude without recognizing the key role played by UNAIDS under the leadership of Michel Sidibé, its Executive Director, in assisting Member States in fighting the HIV/AIDS epidemic. I am glad to note that Mr. Sidibé will be travelling to Brazil next week for an awareness-raising campaign associated with the Fédération Internationale de Football Association World Cup.

Finally, I would like to affirm Brazil's readiness to continue supporting the efforts of the international community by executing cooperation projects and donating to entities, such as the International Drug Purchase Facility, of which Brazil is a proud co-founder and an active member. We believe that the recent budgetary challenges faced by entities dedicated to the fight against HIV/AIDS need to be overcome, and I call upon developed countries, among others, to keep their commitment to maintaining and expanding their pledges and international cooperation with a view to the fulfilment of our collective engagement to saving human lives.

Mr. Goddard (Barbados): Barbados thanks the Secretary-General for the report prepared for review at this meeting (A/68/825).

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier today by the representative of Trinidad and Tobago on behalf of the Caribbean Community. I will focus on key aspects of Barbados's progress in implementing the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS (resolution S-26/2, annex) and the Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS (resolution 65/277, annex).

The comprehensive Barbados HIV programme is evidence-based, gender-sensitive and human rights-based, and addresses prevention, treatment, care and support. The national HIV treatment plan was expanded in 2001, and there has been a significant expansion of prevention and care services, with decentralized testing and referral to high-quality care services. The introduction of antiretroviral treatment in 2002, free at the point of delivery, was a critical turning point. Between 2001 and 2010, there was a significant reduction in newly diagnosed cases of HIV infections and a dramatic decline in mortality rates among persons living with HIV, from 10 per cent to 2 per cent. An estimated 86 per cent of persons who need antiretroviral therapy are receiving it. Voluntary counselling and testing are available within family planning and HIV-prevention services.

Efforts to prevent HIV continue on other fronts. The unmet need for contraceptives has been reduced. Increased access to prevention, treatment and care services for vulnerable populations has been achieved through the national HIV/AIDS progrmme. Behaviour change, which is critical to HIV prevention, is one of our priorities. The key messages being transmitted at this time are unequivocal and advocate the use of condoms, reduced numbers of partners, stopping HIV-related stigma and discrimination, and taking advantage of available services. The prevalence of HIV in the general population was estimated at 1.2 per cent at the end of 2010. AIDS mortality rates have been reduced, as I mentioned, to under 2 per cent. The rate of mother-to-child transmission had fallen to 0.8 per cent by 2012, and Barbados has had no reported cases of mother-to-child transmission in the past seven years.

Empowering women and reducing gender inequality increases the capacity of women and girls to protect themselves from HIV. As is pointed out in the report of the Secretary-General, prevailing gender norms can diminish women's ability to negotiate condom use. It also disadvantages men and boys by encouraging and sanctioning risky behaviour. Barbados continues to

develop a national gender policy. Other programming focuses, inter alia, on building skills for negotiating condom use and condom use education. The Partnership for Peace programme aims to reduce domestic violence of which women and girls are the main victims. Work continues on encouraging healthy behaviour in men.

Stigma and discrimination undermine human dignity. The work on changing attitudes and behaviour is ongoing. In keeping with our commitment under the 2011 Political Declaration, Barbados has strengthened its national actions to address those issues. Programming includes ongoing stigma and discrimination campaigns and workshops, targeting outreach persons and health-care providers. Two dramatic productions centred on transgendered persons and female sex workers have been staged, aimed at generating a national conversation.

I now wish to highlight the critical role of partnership in an effective HIV response. Civil society plays an enormous role, and a small civil society grant system financially supports the work of civil society organizations, particularly those that focus on key populations, behaviour change and communication. As a member of the Caribbean Community, Barbados is a member of the Pan-Caribbean Partnership against HIV/AIDS and is supported by a number of development partners. Support for the national HIV programme is also provided by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, UN-Women, the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, the Caribbean Public Health Agency, the Centers for Disease Control, the World Bank and others. Barbados therefore welcomes such assistance, while recognizing that the harmonization of country-level programmes with national strategic plans and sensitivity to the cultural context are the most efficient means for achieving targets.

Barbados wishes to highlight the significant challenges posed by the classification of small developing States, such as ours, as middle- or high-income countries. That classification severely curtails our access to concessionary financing to assist efforts to fund and implement national HIV programmes. While we will continue to make our best efforts to mobilize resources domestically, continuous international cooperation is urgently needed. HIV/AIDs will remain a priority on the international agenda, including in the post-2015 development framework. Barbados looks forward to the high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS to be held at the United Nations in 2015.

Mrs. Chikava (Zimbabwe): My delegation aligns itself with the statements made this morning by the representative of Malawi on behalf of the States members of the Southern African Development Community, and by the representative of South Africa on behalf of the Group of African States. We also take note of the report of the Secretary-General (A/68/825) submitted under agenda item 10.

In Zimbabwe, HIV continues to cause untold suffering to many. The health system, which has borne the brunt of the epidemic, continues to reel under capacity constraints, adversely affecting the overall health services delivered. The epidemic has also lowered life expectancy and contributed to the reversal of the development gains witnessed since 1980. As we approach the 2015 target for implementing our commitment in the Political Declarations, we note that, in all its dimensions, the epidemic has had a disproportionate impact on women and girls. Inequalities between women and men impair the ability of women to negotiate for sex in relationships. At the same time, poverty compels women and girls to resort to risky coping behaviours, such as prostitution and exchanging sex for favours.

It is therefore critical to recognize the positive impact that the empowerment of women through education, life skills, employment opportunities and support for entrepreneurial activities could have on reducing their risk of HIV infection. As we extend national initiatives that target that group, we are increasingly paying attention to the plight of older women who are left to care for orphaned grandchildren as well as that of children heading households.

Zimbabwe's HIV/AIDS response has been carried out in difficult circumstances as a result of the sanctions levelled against my country. Despite those circumstances, the Government has maintained a strong political will that has resulted in significant progress in reducing the spread of HIV. That has been achieved through a multipronged approach aimed at promoting abstinence, condom use, delayed onset for sexual activities among girls and boys, and in encouraging a general change in risky behaviours. We have also made great strides towards expanding access to treatment for all, including pregnant women. Our effort has been buttressed by dedicated domestic resource mobilization and support from international partners and mechanisms. In that regard, we appreciate

the support received through the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

We are gratified to note that the gains we have achieved have been echoed at the global level. It is a significant mark of progress that, whereas an HIV diagnosis was once considered a death sentence, nowadays improved access to treatment has given millions of people the ability to live a normal life. However, we must ensure that the change in perception does not result in complacence. HIV/AIDS remains a scourge that must be eliminated.

Strong international cooperation and support have had a significant impact on the achievements made to reduce the spread of HIV. It therefore follows that if we are to transform the dream of ending AIDS into reality, we must further strengthen global cooperation in that area. We also need to be decisive about increasing financing for the HIV response to ensure that we do not witness a reversal of the progress we have made to date. We stress the importance of supporting the strengthening of national health systems and local manufacturing of medicine to increase capacity to cope with the demands of the epidemic. As we accelerate implementation of our commitment on HIV, we need to sustain a multipronged approach to prevention that takes into account different regional customs and standards. There is no one size fits all.

Remaining cognizant of the foregoing, each of us has the responsibility to ensure that we do not stall in our hard-won progress by poisoning the discourse on HIV with excessive politicization of issues. The global AIDS response must not be overshadowed by secondary causes, as had occurred during the Commission on the Status of Women when the draft resolution on Women, the girl child and HIV and AIDS was considered; we must remain united in our common goals of ending the epidemic and saving lives.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the commitment of Zimbabwe's Government to working with all stakeholders at the national, regional and international levels towards our coomon goal of eliminating the epidemic.

Mr. Mamabolo (South Africa): We spoke earlier this morning on behalf of Africa as Chair of the Group of African States. I shall now speak in my national capacity.

At the outset, let me thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive and enlightening report (A/68/825) on an issue to which my delegation attaches great importance. We welcome his recommendations in the report. We would also like to express our profound appreciation for the role played by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS in assisting countries to fight the scourge of HIV and AIDS at the national level.

My delegation is encouraged by the significant progress made globally, in particular in Africa, in the fight against HIV and AIDS. It proves that the strategies and tactics that have been employed since the outbreak of the pandemic three decades ago are starting to yield postive results. However, that does not give us room to relax. In fact, it should inspire us to undertake more rigorous efforts to fight the epidemic. That is particularly true for our region.

Consequently, we also share the Secretary-General's sentiments that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have played a critical role in the fight against HIV and AIDS. However, some MDGs, such as the targets for HIV and AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, are not likely to be achieved by 2015. We should therefore make a concerted effort to ensure that the issues that are lagging are certainly placed on the post-2015 development agenda.

Key to the fight against the disease is the availability of resources. It is therefore important for commitments made previously to be honoured. Furthermore, we recognize that no country can win the fight on its own. South Africa therefore believes that enhanced international cooperation among States is important if we are to achieve our aim of zero new infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths. We also need to share knowledge about what is and what is not working for our different regions.

For South Africa, gender equality and the elimination of gender-based violence and abuse remain a priority in the fight against HIV and AIDS. To that end, the South African Government adopted legislation in March — namely, the Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill — to promote women's empowerment and gender equality. Furthermore, male involvement has been identified as an important link in eliminating gender-based violence and abuse. Additional approaches that have greatly contributed to the fight against HIV anmd AIDS in South Africa

was the campaigning to encourage circumcision among men, as correctly noted in the Secretary-General's report. In May last year, voluntary medical male circumcision in institutions of higher learning, including universities and colleges, was implemented. The aim of the campaign is to create awareness among students of the benefits of medical male circumcision, together with HIV counselling and testing, counselling on safe sexual practices, including the correct and consistent use of condoms, and a reduction in multiple concurrent sexual partners.

Consequently, we are witnessing the benefit of male circumcision, as well as the supporting initiatives that I have just mentioned, in reducing new HIV infections. We have also seen great progress in increasing the number of health-care facilities that provide antiretroviral drugs from 490 in 2010 to 3,540 currently. The number of nurses trained and certified to initiate antiretroviral treatment in the absence of a doctor has also increased from 250 nurses in 2010 to 23,000 in 2013 through the nurse-initiated management of the antiretroviral therapy programme. The programme has made it possible to increase the number of people receiving treatment from 923,000 in 2010 to 1.9 million in 2013, thereby doubling the number of people receiving treatment.

The cooperation and collaboration of civil society organizations have also yielded some important gains for our country. We will continue that approach. Furthermore, our Government continues to work with traditional leaders in the fight against HIV, AIDS and tuberculosis as part of our National Strategic Plan on HIV, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and Tuberculosis (TB). That partnership culminated in the signing of the plan to revitalize the HIV counselling and testing campaign in rural areas under traditional leaders. The National Plan on HIV, STIs and TB is based on the following pillars: zero new HIV or TB infections, zero new mother-to-child transmissions, zero preventable deaths from HIV and TB and zero discrimination associated with HIV, STIs and TB.

While we have made progress in the fight against HIV and AIDS, we are still far from where we should be. We continue to work hard to ensure that mother-to-child transmissions drop to below 2 per cent by 2030 and that new infections are reduced by more than four times among women aged between 15 and 24 years of age in the period up to 2030. South Africa is also working with others in order to increase the life expectancy of men and women up to 70 years of age by 2030 through the progressive improvement of evidence-based, preventive and therapeutic interventions for HIV and AIDS. We will continue to strive to make antiretroviral drugs available to all, including all those who are HIV-positive, and to promote consistent and correct condom use, as well as the universal availability of pre-exposure prophylaxis and antiretroviral treatment.

Finally, we look forward to the convening of the high-level meeting on HIV and AIDS in 2016, as it is crucial to maintain the political momentum and to take stock after the post-2015 development agenda has been launched.

Mrs. Mørch Smith (Norway): In the summer of 1981, here in New York City people started dying. Doctors did not understand why. The families and friends of the deceased did not understand why people who had been healthy just a few months earlier suddenly had an immune system that more or less collapsed.

The first article about that mysterious new disease in the United States was in the New York Times on 3 July, almost exactly 33 years ago. Its title was "Rare cancer seen in 41 homosexuals". Since the deaths were concentrated largely in the gay community and it was difficult to understand why that was happening, initially the disease was even called "gay cancer".

Today, we know that that was not the beginning of the HIV/AIDS epidemic globally but the start of the deadly epidemic here in the United States. It was also the start of a stigma that people living with HIV and AIDS have had to confront in the years since then. Today, we of course know that HIV and AIDS are not diseases that affect only people with a certain sexual orientation. They affect everyone, and the epidemic is now on every continent, affecting women, men and children, young and old.

However, in the years since 1981, there has also been progress We know now a lot more about the virus itself and how to prevent it from spreading even farther. Considerable progress has been made in the response to the AIDS epidemic globally, but equally significant gaps remain. Without addressing those gaps, we will not be able to get the HIV epidemic under control. We therefore must take care of our unfinished business now and continue to make HIV/AIDS our business after 2015.

Norway would like to thank the Secretary-General for his excellent report (A/68/825) and a thorough

analysis of the current situation and challenges related to HIV globally. We are pleased to know the significant global reduction in new infections. The sharp reduction in mother-to-child transmissions proves that our joint efforts yield results. The increasing number of HIV-infected people who receive care and treatment leads to the increased health and well-being of themselves, their partners and their families. But in order to bring the epidemic under complete control, we also must tackle the shortfalls of our response.

First, we note with concern that even if financing is improving, we are short of the funding required. A shared responsibility for financing is important to ensuring that the international community is able to sustain and increase investments up until and after 2015. Available funds need to be spent more efficiently. We all need to fulfil our commitments to financing.

Secondly, the rate of new infections is still too high. To control the epidemic, primary prevention efforts must be re-emphasized.

Thirdly, it is unacceptable that infected children are half as likely as adults to have access to antiretroviral therapy. Child-friendly medication is on the market and needs to be available to all who need it.

Fourthly, young people in general, and young women in particular, are more likely to be infected by HIV and are more likely to die from AIDS. Youths need information — including comprehensive sexuality education, and access to services — and to be able to participate in decision-making that concerns them.

Fifthly, we need to focus on the groups we know are disproportionately affected — the so-called key populations. We will not be able to stop the HIV epidemic until we stop new infections among men who have sex with men, injecting drug users, sex workers and other marginalized groups. The evidence is clear; criminalization is the wrong approach. Ensuring the rights of key populations to non-discrimination in health care and in other aspects of life is the right approach.

Good leadership and governance are key. HIV thrives in situations of poverty and inequity, violence, gender inequality, human rights violations and discrimination. In the context of strong political leadership, the next phase of the global AIDS response after 2015 needs to be evidence based. That is the only way we can focus scarce resources where they will have the most impact and eventually enable a world free of AIDS. At the high-level meetings in 2001, 2006 and 2011, we made joint commitments and developed accountability structures to measure the results of our common efforts. We therefore endorse the suggestion of convening a high-level meeting in 2016 in order to review progress as well as to see what measures that need to be made further on.

Ms. Grignon (Kenya): I would like to thank the President for organizing today's plenary meeting to review the progress made in response to the AIDS pandemic.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of South Africa on behalf of the Group of African States. We take note of and thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/68/825).

The timing of today's plenary meeting is of major importance as the international community accelerates the achievement of the goals of the 2011 Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS (resolution 65/277, annex), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the formulation of the post-2015 development agenda and its ambitious targets, especially those related to HIV prevention policies, to treatment and for combating discrimination against those living with HIV/AIDS. We must use our time wisely and redouble our efforts to promote access to HIV prevention, treatment and care to all those who need it. It is clear that HIV/AIDS will remain a major global challenge beyond 2015.

While the Secretary-General's report indicates that new HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths, and especially the number of children newly infected with HIV, continue to decline globally, such progress has not been achieved everywhere. In sub-Saharan Africa, the campaign to combat AIDS is still affected by a serious shortfall in resources, resulting in a continuing rise in the number of those infected. Furthermore, only 56 per cent of those infected have access to HIV treatment in sub-Saharan Africa.

My delegation is concerned that funding devoted to HIV and AIDS response is still not proportionate to the magnitude of the pandemic, which continues to negatively impact the response. Stigma and discrimination attached to HIV/AIDS also continue to undermine the fight. To address some of those challenges, we call for greater collaborative initiatives, including coherent United Nations inter-agency collaboration that promotes a more integrated response

to HIV/AIDS. Such initiatives must be more closely linked to the broader development agenda with in-built goals to eliminate gender inequalities, stigma and discrimination and to ensure universal health coverage. In that regard, we would like to underscore the role of innovative partnerships, political leadership, the enactment of appropriate legislation, and international trade regulations to ensure that prices for medicines and commodities are affordable to and accessible by even the poor.

Article 21, subsection 3, of our Constitution creates a duty for all State organs and public offices to address the needs of vulnerable groups in our society. That includes the provision of safety-net programmes. The HIV and AIDS Prevention and Control Act promotes supportive care and protective and preventive measures against HIV and AIDS. In addition to traditional funding to combat HIV and AIDS, the Government of Kenya began operationalizing sustainable domestic funding options, which include earmarking 1 per cent of ordinary Government revenues to a national HIV trust fundamental that provides services to those in need.

The Government has launched the first national action plan to facilitate the mobilization of stakeholders in the design and implementation of actions and targets. The action plan, which has been disseminated in all 47 counties of Kenya, guides stakeholders in how to mainstream gender into the national response to HIV/AIDS. In 2011, Kenya was among the countries that endorsed the global plan towards the elimination of new HIV infections among children by 2015 and keeping their mothers alive.

Although HIV/AIDS remains a great challenge to Kenya, it is noteworthy that the HIV prevalence rate in Kenya has significantly declined over the years, from a high of about 14 per cent in the 1990s to the stabilized current rate of 6 per cent among adults. There are marked gender, age and geographical disparities, with HIV prevalence largely among women at 6.9 per cent compared to that of men at 4.3 per cent. Sexual transmission remains the highest mode of transmission of HIV, which accounts for 85 per cent of all new infections. Unfortunately, every year 10,000 children still die from HIV and AIDS-related complications.

In line with the recent global focus on evidence-informed HIV prevention programming, Kenya's national HIV strategic plan, whose clarion call is "delivering on universal access to services", facilitates the delivery of integrated services at all levels. It has also reduced by 50 per cent the number of new infections and reduced by 25 per cent AIDS-related mortality, markedly decreased HIV-related morbidity due to the availability of antiretroviral treatment, and reduced the socioeconomic impact of HIV/AIDS at the household and community levels.

The Government's collaborative efforts with national and external partners have also led to the formulation of a strategy for the comprehensive prevention of mother-to-child transmission, which targets expectant mothers and their spouses and provides voluntary counseling and testing, as well as antiretroviral treatment for mother and child. As a consequence of the campaign, new infections in children have fallen from an estimated 100 HIV infections per day, to 36.

Another significant effort is the launch of the Beyond Zero Campaign by Kenya's First Lady, Her Excellency Margaret Kenyatta. The campaign aims to promote HIV control and to strengthen maternal and neonatal health services to secure Kenya's future towards an HIV-free generation. Recently and as part of the Beyond Zero Campaign, the First Lady ran two marathons — one in Nairobi and the other in London — to raise awareness and funds for the purchase of mobile clinics for all of the 47 counties of Kenya. The campaign is in line with Kenya's country development priorities, as outlined in our Kenya Vision 2030, the Kenya National AIDS Strategic Plan, and the Kenya Health Sector Strategic Plan 2012-2017.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate our call on the international community to scale up resource mobilization, ensure adequate resource allocation and secure political commitment and leadership in the fight against HIV/AIDS, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and the most affected areas of the world. The end of the AIDS epidemic is within reach. The irrefutable linkages among HIV and AIDS and human rights, sustainable development, gender equality, equity and exclusion should sharpen our focus and redouble inspired action in the fight against the most devastating scourge of our times.

Mr. Bishnoi (India): We take note of the report of the Secretary-General, entitled "Towards ending the AIDS epidemic: meeting the 2015 targets and planning for the post-2015 era" (A /68/825), which outlines the challenges facing the international community on that front.

The National AIDS Control Programme in India has led to an overall reduction in adult HIV prevalence, HIV incidence and AIDS-related mortality over the past decade. India was estimated to have around 2.09 million persons living with HIV in 2011, down from 2.32 million in 2006. Adult HIV prevalence decreased from 0.41 per cent in 2001, to 0.35 per cent in 2006, and to 0.27 per cent in 2011. India also witnessed an overall reduction of 57 per cent in estimated annual new HIV infections between 2000 and 2011, reflecting the impact of scaled-up prevention interventions. Wider access to antiretroviral treatment led to a 29 per cent reduction in estimated annual AIDS-related deaths between 2007 and 2011.

The Government has undertaken targeted interventions for high-risk groups and bridge populations, such as female sex workers, men who have sex with men, transgender persons, injecting drug users, truckers and migrants. The other important features of our national AIDS programme include strategizing comprehensive information, education and communication packages for specific segments and scaling up the service delivery component. We have also involved the corporate sector, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders as partners towards that end.

Notwithstanding the encouraging gains made in some of the priority areas identified in the 2011 Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS (resolution 65/277, annex), the overall scenario remains bleak. The report of the Secretary-General notes that an estimated 35 million people are living with HIV worldwide. It further notes that more than half of the people eligible for antiretroviral therapy still do not have access to antiretroviral drugs. The report notes that the HIV epidemic continues to disproportionately affect sub-Saharan Africa, which accounts for an estimated 71 per cent of all people living with HIV globally, 70 per cent of new HIV infections and 75 per cent of AIDS-related deaths.

On the other hand, in much of the developed world of today, HIV/AIDS is no longer a life-threatening disease. As scaled-up antiretroviral therapy extends lives and improves quality of life, older adults are accounting for an increased share of people living with HIV. It is estimated that fewer than 6 per cent of persons receiving treatment have access to second-generation antiretroviral drugs. Clearly, the challenge we face today is not the unavailability of medical treatment, but rather accessibility to medical treatment, primarily due to its lack of affordability in many developing countries. Such a North-South divide is simply unacceptable.

While the report of the Secretary-General makes a few important recommendations for addressing the challenges we face — including through the development of new ambitious targets, closing gaps in access to services, replacement of punitive approaches with protective ones, and so on— it is disappointing to note that it fails to address two critical issues, namely, the need to expand international funding and accessibility to antiretroviral treatment.

Another important shortcoming of the HIV/AIDS response is that it has created a vertical programme to address the crisis more effectively. That would have worked well in conjunction with well-functioning health systems. Many developing countries, however, are grappling with issues of capacity and quality in their health-care systems. Therefore it is important that HIV/AIDS-related programmes are integrated with the overall strengthening of health systems.

One of the major obstacles to accessing treatment is the high cost of antiretroviral drugs. In addition, as the HIV/AIDS experience has shown, diagnostic tools are also important for effective prevention. The Indian pharmaceutical industry has been plugging that critical gap by producing high-quality, affordable drugs for use in India and in other developing countries. India is committed to using all flexibilities under the World Trade Organization's Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) to ensure the availability of affordable and high-quality medicine to all people living with HIV.

It is regrettable to note that the TRIPS flexibilities, which are critical in the provision of public health services to millions across the developing world, are being questioned. Narrow considerations of commerce and profitability should not be allowed to deny the most basic and most fundamental human right — the right to life. India stands ready to play a role in that context. While Governments should undoubtedly augment their national efforts, it is equally evident that in many developing countries Governments will not be able to meet these challenges alone. The need for an integrated approach that includes effective prevention strategies, access to low-cost, affordable treatment for all, and declared international support cannot be

overemphasized if we are to effectively contain HIV/AIDS.

Mr. Ntwaagae (Botswana): We would like to thank the Secretary-General for his current report (A/68/825) and for his continued devoted attention to the issues of women's and children's health, the elimination of violence against women, and the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV. We also particularly appreciate the continuing commitment of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS under the leadership of Michel Sidibé.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the Permanent Representatives of the Republic of South Africa and Malawi on behalf of the Group of African States and the Southern African Development Community, respectively.

HIV and AIDS continue to be one of the greatest challenges of our time and one that poses significant challenges to our societies' socioeconomic development and well-being. As the Secretary-General clearly states in his report, the AIDS epidemic is far from over. In that regard, today's meeting is not only timely but also relevant in the context of the 2015 deadline for meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the ongoing discussions on the post-2015 development agenda. It will therefore make a crucial contribution to renewing the international community's commitment to responding to HIV and AIDS and to charting the way forward.

As highlighted in the Secretary-General's report, the global HIV and AIDS response has come a long way. Much has been achieved, but much more remains to be done. Botswana welcomes the progress made by many countries in areas that include scaled-up access to HIV treatment, expanded access to services for preventing mother-to-child transmission and declines in new infections, as well as programmes and interventions that promote HIV testing, consistent and regular condom use and many other efforts. They have borne notable fruit in many ways, and because of them we believe that the vision of getting to zero new infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths for an AIDS-free generation is achievable.

In that regard, however, we remain concerned about the enormous toll the epidemic continues to take on young people. The world's failure to address the needs of children living with HIV and the gaps in current efforts to reduce sexual transmission of HIV are of great concern to my delegation. They are a clear indication that AIDS is far from being over. The world should therefore not be lulled into complacency by some of these seemingly impressive results.

In the quest to turn the AIDS epidemic around, we will need concerted efforts on the part of the international community to achieve the targets set out in the Political Declarations on HIV and AIDS (resolution 65/277, annex) that are the subject of our meeting today. To that end, Botswana shares the view that the international community must redouble its efforts to build on the gains made and step up its work to address barriers that continue to hinder effective responses to the epidemic. We therefore recognize the importance of political will and commitment in addressing complex issues relating to national laws and policies, access to services for all, and the elimination of stigma and discrimination.

Furthermore, the importance of adequate, secure and predictable funding for a sustained global HIV and AIDS response, beyond closing the resource gap, cannot be overemphasized. As the Secretary-General's report makes clear, while countries are encouraged to mobilize much-needed resources to fund their HIV response, many of them, particularly developing countries with a limited capacity to increase domestic resources, will remain dependent on international assistance to fund their response. We must therefore maintain the international commitment to assisting countries if we are to sustain the progress that has been made in the more than 30 years of combating the epidemic. In that connection, we welcome the pledge made way back in December 2013 by international donors of $12 billion to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

It is evident that HIV and AIDS will remain a global challenge well beyond 2015. In that regard, we believe that the ongoing discussions on the post-2015 development agenda provide an opportunity for ensuring that HIV and AIDS remain a top priority. In that context, I would like to emphasize the importance of completing the unfinished business of the MDGs and giving sustained attention to the AIDS response post-2015. In our view, the post-2015 agenda should build on the MDGs, whose Goal number 6 focuses on the response to AIDS. The new framework should therefore clearly reflect the role of an effective AIDS response in broader health and development efforts.

My delegation also fully supports the convening of a high-level meeting in 2016 so we can sustain the momentum that we have gained in implementing HIV and AIDS programmes. I would like to conclude by reaffirming how important Botswanta considers the fight against HIV and AIDS and the achievement of the right of all to enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. We remain committed to the implementation of the Political Declarations on HIV and AIDS, and central to our efforts is our commitment to ensuring respect for human rights and access to prevention, treatment, care and support services for our people.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.